

Yemeni mediation panel sidetracked

SANA (AP) — Socialist allegations that Prime Minister Haider Al Attas was accosted by northem soldiers while trying to enter the capital sidetracked a resumed effort Saturday to resolve a dispute between southern and northern leaders. The "dialogue committee" composed of high-ranking tribal figures and officials discussed the incident and ordered a special investigating team headed by Interior Minister Yehya Al Mutawakil to report on the incident. Committee members had planned instead to discuss ways to resolve the dispute between President Abd al-Aziz Saleh and Vice-President Ali Salem Al Beidh that has plunged the country into a deepening political and economic crisis. Socialists said three units of military police equipped with heavy, medium and light arms intercepted Mr. Attas' motorcade Friday on the outskirts of the capital. The party contended the force was led by an officer known to be close to President Saleh (see page 2). The Socialists complained that Mr. Attas, a member of the party, was allowed to proceed only after he contacted a number of leaders, including the president.



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King visits JIB in London

LONDON (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein, who is on a private visit to the United Kingdom, Saturday visited the Jordanian Information Bureau in London and met with its staff. Bureau head Nasser Jdeh briefed the King on the office's activities which were initiated in 1992. He said that the bureau had started contacts with Jordanian students in Britain to provide them with cultural, economic and political publications about Jordan. The bureau is entrusted with presenting the Jordanian views to the British press.

Syria slams Arafat for missing deadline

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syria Saturday sharply criticised Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat for missing a deadline for an agreement on the details of an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho. "Israel is hypocritically playing for time and knows that Arafat will lay down his cards once after the other to achieve any gain to hold up to the Palestinian and Arab opposition," the official Al Thawra daily said. "Israel knew the PLO leader could no longer stop his initiative since surrender is a bottomless pit," the paper said. "So the game of blackmail began just when Arafat seemed defenceless." Mr. Arafat, it argued, was desperately trying to salvage the Israeli-Palestinian accord on limited autonomy for Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho signed Sept. 13 in Washington, adding that his concessions would completely water down the deal. "All the agreement's clauses will then be interpreted according to Israeli logic and not be subject to discussion," it said.

Holst suffered a minor stroke

OSLO (AP) — Foreign Minister Jorgen Holst, who secretly brokered a secret Middle East peace agreement, has suffered a minor stroke, his doctors said Saturday. Mr. Holst was hospitalised for the second time in three weeks late Thursday after he became acutely ill aboard a government jet that was bringing him home from meetings in Spain. "He has been fully conscious the whole time and his intellectual functions have not been affected," said a brief statement signed by his doctor, Rolf Nyberg-Hansen, of the National Hospital in Oslo.

Libyan rebels sure dissident kidnapped

CAIRO (AFP) — The Libyan opposition in Egypt said Saturday it was "convinced" that one of its leaders, Mansour Kikha, who went missing in Cairo last Saturday, had been kidnapped by agents of Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi. Mohammad Jibril, Cairo spokesman for the opposition Libyan National Salvation Front, told AFP that on Thursday the front managed to contact Mr. Kikha's brother Mahmoud, who lives in Benghazi, in northeastern Libya. "Mahmoud Kikha said a Libyan official had assured (Mansour) Kikha's relatives that Mansour was in Libya, but did not say whether Mansour's family had managed to meet him, or whether the Libyan dissident went to Libya willingly," Mr. Jibril said. "The Libyan opposition is convinced Mansour Kikha was kidnapped by agents" of Col. Qaddafi. Mr. Jibril said. (See page 2)

Assad meets Sedki

DAMASCUS (AP) — President Hafez Al Assad met Saturday with Egyptian Prime Minister Atef Sedki for talks on the latest developments in the Middle East and in bilateral relations. The official Syrian Arab News Agency said Dr. Sedki briefed Mr. Assad on the meetings of the supreme joint Syrian-Egyptian committee and efforts to boost cooperation between the two countries in all fields.

Israel, PLO meet in Oslo in bid to end self-rule deadlock

Combined agency dispatches

ISRAELI and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) officials were set to begin key talks in Oslo late Saturday in a bid to break the deadlock over implementation of the Palestinian autonomy plan, a senior Israeli government official said.

The official said the six-member Israeli team would include Environment Minister Yossi Sarid and Israel's chief negotiator at the autonomy talks in Egypt, General Amnon Shahak.

The delegation would try to "overcome the differences which arose recently," the official said, but he stressed that Israel would "not make any concessions on security matters."

Asked whether Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin would meet PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat in Cairo next week the official said "everything depends on the results of the contacts over the next few days."

The two leaders failed to agree on key aspects of implementing Palestinian autonomy at talks in Cairo last Sunday, but said they hoped to meet again in about 10 days' time.

Israel and the PLO began direct talks on Oct. 13 in Egypt to launch Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho by Dec. 13, but failed to meet the deadline set out in the accord signed in Washington in September.

Israel Television said on Saturday that Mr. Rabin's political adviser Jacques Neria had "gone abroad" to hold talks with PLO officials, but gave no further details.

Israeli army radio meanwhile said Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and foreign ministry director-general Uri Savir would join the talks in Oslo on Monday. They would focus on the future Palestinian police force to be deployed in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, the radio added.

Earlier, a PLO official in Tunis said the PLO would offer to drop its demand for sole control of crossing points at the meeting with Israel in Norway.

Chief negotiator Nahil Shaath and other PLO officials will instead propose that an equal number of Israeli forces and Palestinian police man posts between the self-rule areas and Egypt and Jordan, the official said.

The official, a member of the PLO Executive Committee who asked not to be named, said the delegation would also offer some compromises in other areas which he did not specify.

The PLO delegation arrived in Cairo Friday after receiving its instructions from Tunis, and then left the Egyptian capital for Oslo on Saturday.

Sources in Cairo said the PLO team travelling to Norway included Yasser Abed Rabbo, the organisation's information department head. "We want to prevent the next Arafat-Rabin summit failing as was the case for the last one in Cairo," Mr. Abed Rabbo told Reuters before heading for Oslo.

The PLO was willing to compromise in some areas to meet Israeli security demands, he said.

He said the PLO was ready to share control of borders with international forces which

(Continued on page 3)

Infighting hits Russian reformers; Gore, Kohl rally behind Yeltsin

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Russian democrats, humbled by their debacle in last week's parliamentary elections, are engaging in mudslinging and finger-pointing over who is to blame for their poor performance in the historic poll.

The gloves came off in the pro-reform camp after election results showed that ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky and his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) ranked first in nationwide voting from party lists, beating the pro-government Russia's Choice.

The overall result, which included voting in constituencies, gave Russia's Choice the largest number of seats in the legislature but the bitterness was apparent among party leaders who confidently expected to form the majority in parliament.

Leading reformers who rarely succumbed to smear campaigns suddenly were at each other's throats and President Boris Yeltsin was expected to step in this week to end the infighting with a major government reshuffle.

Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, a candidate on the pro-government Russia's Choice ticket, took a punch at leader Yegor Gaidar this week in an interview to the newspaper *Svoboda*, stating that the young economist had failed to explain in layman's terms the issues at stake in the campaign.

"My friend Gaidar might know what he wants out of reforms but he did not explain it to the average voter, in easy terms, by appearing for an hour on television like Zhirinovsky did," Mr. Kozyrev said.

"It could have been done by resorting to simple language, not with paradigms or talk of inflationary expectations," he added.

Mr. Kozyrev said that the campaign strategy was all wrong, citing a television

advertisement for Russia's Choice that featured a fat Saint Bernard as an example of the party's lack of tact towards a poverty-stricken electorate.

"That dog looked like it ate more meat than my constituents did in Murmansk," he charged, speaking of the far north city he represents.

Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin ruled out further economic shock therapy for Russia following the setback for reformers in the elections, a newspaper reported.

Mr. Chernomyrdin, in an interview with the *Trud* newspaper, blamed the reformers' poor showing on the ambitions of government ministers who formed rival parties rather than unite behind President Yeltsin.

"Everyone of them stood as an individual (or) joined various political blocs," he said. "They confused the people, misled them and that certainly had an effect on the results."

The reformist government will now probably have to make substantial concessions in order to pull together a coalition, the anti-reform LDP, communists and their Agrarian Party allies boasting some 40 per cent of seats in parliament.

A leading centrist warned they Mr. Zhirinovsky will be Russian president within two years unless the government softens its economic reforms. The warning by Nikolai Travin is being taken seriously by the Russian media.

Russia's new constitution, adopted on Dec. 12 in a simultaneous vote for the new legislature, includes few safeguards against the abuse of sweeping presidential powers contained in the basic law.

Leading reformers including Mr. Gaidar, Yuri Chernichenko of Russia's Choice and Lev Ponomarev, co-head of the movement for a demo-

cratic Russia, launched a bitter personal attack on Mr. Zhirinovsky, saying his party's strong performance showed fascism had become a political reality in Russia.

"Facism, beaten by Russia a century ago, has returned to Russia. All the promises of Vladimir Zhirinovsky are lies and can only lead to war," they warned in a joint statement.

Although Mr. Zhirinovsky cannot yet impose his views, he received massive support from within the army.

The United States and Germany pledged Saturday to cooperate closely in supporting Mr. Yeltsin's democratic reforms.

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and U.S. Vice-President Al Gore said after two hours of talks at Mr. Kohl's residence in Ossendorf that they had discussed ways of strengthening support for democratic and economic reforms in Russia.

"As we approach the NATO summit and President Clinton's meeting on Jan. 10 to discuss European security after the end of the cold war, and may also address the wish of some Eastern European countries to join the alliance.

Mr. Kohl said the talks at his hunting home in a middle-class suburb of Ludwigshafen, in the Rhine, focused on ways of supporting economic change through the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

"Reforms will have no chance unless a social situation is created that offers citizens a hopeful perspective for the future so that people do not associate democracy with social failure and economic loss," he said.



Liberation Organisation (PLO) autonomy agreement (AFP photo)

Israeli soldiers clash with Ramallah protesters

RAMALLAH, occupied West Bank (Agencies) — Israeli soldiers wounded four Palestinians in clashes in the occupied West Bank town of Ramallah on Saturday, Arab sources said.

The PLO says Israeli security patrols in Gaza should be confined to the settlements. Israel, PLO officials say, wants control of about 10 per cent of the strip to do the job.

In the Norwegian capital, foreign ministry spokesman Jan Egeland said that U.S., Russian, Egyptian and European officials would join in the talks on Monday at an Oslo hotel.

Talks snagged on the control of crossing points between the autonomous areas and neighbouring Egypt and Jordan, as well as on the size of the Jericho district and an Israeli troop presence around Jewish settlements.

The PLO was willing to compromise in some areas to meet Israeli security demands, he said.

He said the PLO was ready to share control of borders with international forces which

Militant Palestinian groups and Jewish settlers have stepped up attacks in an attempt to wreck the deal.

Siocne news of the deal emerged in September, 44 Palestinians and 18 Israelis have been killed.

Israel will for the time being not take the PLO and its mainstream Fatah movement off the "terrorist" organisations list, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said Friday.

"We must first do some checking, to the extent where certain problems seem linked to certain marginal elements of Fatah, before we proceed with changes," he said on Israel television.

Mr. Rabin has for over a month refused to approve a bill requiring that the PLO, Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Army be removed from the list of organisations considered "terrorist" under Israeli law.

Local residents said three other Palestinians were slightly wounded when troops fired rubber bullets and concussion grenades at 30 to 40 stone-throwing youths.

The youths, demonstrating against the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) peace deal with Israel, burned tyres and blocked off a main road in the town.

Under the deal signed by Israel and the PLO in September, Israeli forces should have started withdrawing from the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho.

But Israeli Television said the Fatah Hawks, the movement's armed wing, had killed an Israeli settler on Oct. 30 near the West Bank town of Ramallah. The killing was condemned by Arafat.

The Israeli army has meanwhile removed the names of 36 activists of the Fatah and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) movement from the list of wanted Palestinians, military sources said Friday.

The activities include six members of the Red Eagles group, the PFLP's armed wing.

which opposes the Israeli-PLO autonomy deal, they said.

Fatah-PFLP clashes

Six Palestinians were wounded in clashes here on Saturday between militants from Fatah and the PFLP, Palestinian sources said.

The clashes arose from a private dispute over possession of a football pitch in the Sheikh Radwan district, the sources said, and were not linked to the PLO-Israel accord on limited autonomy for the Palestinians.

The militants exchanged blows and threw stones at each other before leaders of Fatah and the PFLP managed to separate them.

Earlier in Jerusalem a commander of an Israeli undercover unit said the army had stepped up the activities of its undercover units, responsible for tracking down wanted Palestinians, due to a rise in anti-Israeli attacks.

Speaking on Israeli Radio, the commander, whose name was not given, said: "We have a bigger presence on the ground and our activities have been bolstered, due to the growth in the activities of (extremists) who claim success in killing settlers."

"They are using increasingly sophisticated methods, and are adapting to them, because our work against wanted Palestinians continues."

He said there was no question of dismantling the special units, whose members are usually disguised as Palestinians, despite the Israel-PLO autonomy accord.

Several Israeli and Palestinian human rights organisations have slammed the special units' actions, accusing them of liquidating Palestinians.

The colonel insisted his unit was "not a unit of killers, inasmuch as it follows the same orders on when to open fire as those in effect in the army as a whole."

Nabulsi: Reopening of banks unrelated to accord with PLO

AMMAN (J.T.) — The reopening of Jordanian commercial banks in the Israeli-occupied West Bank is not contingent on the signing of an economic agreement between Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) Chairman Mohammad Said Nabulsi said Saturday.

Dr. Nabulsi said he was surprised by news reports on the subject. "The reopening of the Jordanian banks in the occupied territories that were closed in 1967 has been (under consideration) since 1968," he said.

On Friday, Agence France Presse quoted a Jordanian official as saying: "We can no longer wait and if the PLO has not replied by Dec. 20, we will interpret this silence as an answer and will go ahead and open our banks."

Dr. Nabulsi said that there had been many attempts to reopen the banks in the past, but they were unsuccessful except for the Cairo-Amman Bank that resumed operation in 1986 through a special agreement.

He said that since the peace talks had started the time was suitable for reopening those branches within the framework of the peace process by which the CBJ would oversee the work of these branches and their licensing.

He added that the Palestinian side is aware of the agreement with the Israeli side.

Dr. Nabulsi said he asked Jordanian banks to be ready for the go ahead once the Cabinet approved the CBJ arrangements.

Jordan-PLO accord

Deputy Prime Minister Maan Abu Nouwai told Parliament Wednesday that PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat was expected to refer the draft economic accord document to the PLO Executive Committee for study as soon as he ended a visit to Britain and Ireland.

Dr. Abo Nouwai rejected deputies' suggestions that the draft agreement had "failed" and said he was personally assured by Mr. Arafat that it would be followed up.

Mr. Arafat returned to his Tunis headquarters Thursday from Ireland and chaired several meetings of the PLO leadership.

The Islamic Salvation Front Friday set conditions for talks with the government over two years of political unrest.

The authorities replied to the offer with several conditions of their own which appeared to exclude the FIS but left the door open to others.

An exiled FIS leader, Rahah Kebir said in Bono on Friday the front had five conditions for talks

Military holds up Attas' motorcade

ADEN (R) — Armed military police in three jeeps briefly stopped Yemeni Prime Minister Haidar Abu Bakr Al Attas from entering the capital Sanaa Friday, the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP) said.

The motorcade of Mr. Attas, who is one of the YSP's leaders, was held up for about half an hour, the party politburo (leadership) said in a statement released in Aden.

The incident came amid months of paralysing political feuding between Yemeni Vice-President Ali Salem Al Beedh, who is head of YSP, and President Ali Abdullah Saleh over the direction Yemen has taken since north and south merged in 1990.

The prime minister was allowed to drive into Sanaa after he used his car phone to call several political leaders in the capital, the statement said.

It added that the jeeps followed the motorcade into the city centre.

Mr. Attas was coming from Aden, the southern port city where the formerly Marxist YSP has its base. It was not clear why he was stopped or who ordered the military police to let him proceed.

The YSP said the military police who stopped Mr. Attas were under the command of Colonel Mohammad Yahya Al Hawari, who is from the same northern tribe and village as President Saleh.

"Such incidents are designed to escalate the existing crisis," the statement said, adding that the YSP demanded an immediate investigation.

The YSP was the ruling par-

ty of South Yemen before unification. It ostensibly governs the united Yemen in coalition with Mr. Saleh's northern General Peoples' Congress (GPC) and the smaller Islah party.

But Vice-President Beedh abandoned the capital for Aden over three months ago and refused to carry out his constitutional duties after quarrelling with Mr. Saleh over unification, which he has likened to annexation of the south by the north.

The political crisis has paralysed the government, sparked reports of political killings, illegal armed roadblocks and troop movements and led to fears that Yemen's two halves might split.

"Part of the crisis between north and south is due to interference in the country's internal security situation by different military groups," the YSP statement said.

It repeated a demand, one of 18 made of Mr. Saleh by Mr. Beedh, that all troops be withdrawn from Yemen's cities.

The armies of former North and South Yemen, which watched each other suspiciously over the border before unification, have not yet been fully integrated.

Both Mr. Saleh and Mr. Beedh have said they do not want to see Yemen split, and Mr. Beedh has suggested that the best way to end the crisis was for both men to resign.

A coalition of Yemen's opposition parties called on the three ruling parties to resume dialogue aimed at solving the crisis.

Most Kuwaitis oppose voting rights for women

KUWAIT (R) — Most Kuwaitis oppose granting women the vote or the right to stand for parliament, according to an opinion poll published Saturday.

The Kuwait University survey of 3,500 men and women showed 58 per cent opposed political rights for women, 24 per cent wanted women to have the franchise and 18 per cent favoured granting women the right both to vote and to stand for parliament.

The survey published by newspapers showed a sharp split between traditionalist bedouin areas and liberal Kuwait City.

Ninety-one per cent of respondents in the mainly bedouin Jahra settlement and Kuwait's desert areas opposed giving women either the vote or the right to stand for parliament.

Most Kuwaiti respondents from the affluent central residential areas of Kuwait City

wanted full political rights for women — 77 per cent said they wanted women to have both the vote and the right to stand for parliament.

Organisers said in a statement 500 replies had to be cancelled because "many recipients who opposed women's rights filled the sheets with Koranic and other holy verses, poems and idioms supporting their views."

Women activists had hopes of winning the right to vote after the 1991 Gulf war liberation because of the prominent role women played in the civilian resistance to Iraqi occupation.

During the 1990-91 occupation the emir, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, said he would consider giving Kuwaiti women the right to vote, although he added the issue required time.

The debate was revived when the country's parliament was restored in October 1992 after a six-year break.

Palestinian attitude to peace deal is volatile

By John West
Reuter

NABLUS, occupied West Bank — The level of Palestinian public support for the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) deal with Israel could bounce back from current lows if Israel starts to withdraw from Gaza and Jericho, the head of a polling organisation said.

But four days after a troop pullout from the two areas was to have started, PLO leaders have begun preparing for the worst by forecasting more trouble in negotiations and hinting at a further delay in implementing self-rule.

A poll released on Thursday of more than a thousand

Palestinian showed support for the PLO's agreement with Israel dropped sharply to 41.5 per cent from 64.9 per cent in September. Opposition to the deal was now almost equal at 38.1 per cent.

Underlying support for Palestinian political factions backing the accord also dropped but they still have more support than factions opposing it, said the poll by the Centre for Palestine Research and Studies (CPRS).

"There is about 20 or 25 per cent of the electorate which is the floating vote," CPRS head Said Kanaan told Reuters. "Even many Fatah supporters now say they do not back the agreement but this could change tomorrow if there was

withdrawal."

The results suggested the de-

lay in withdrawal had denting

but not yet permanently dam-

aged support for PLO Chair-

man Arafat and his Fatah fac-

tion.

An Israeli poll on Friday suggested Mr. Arafat's peace partner Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was also suffering a drop in popularity, although a majority of 54 per cent of Israels believed he could still agree with Mr. Arafat on with-

drawing.

PLO officials, like their Israeli counterparts, are now preparing public opinion for further delays and deadlock, which could erode Palestinian support to critical levels.

PLO envoy in Jerusalem for first time in 27 years

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Palestinian representative in London, Aaf Saeid, made a bittersweet homecoming to Jerusalem on Saturday after 27 years in exile, the first high-ranking Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) official to make such a trip.

"It's a very moving moment for me. I hope each Palestinian family can be reunited with their loved ones," said Mr. Saeid, 43, after he embraced family and friends with whom he will spend Christmas.

He spoke optimistically of the peace accord, but regretted that the Israeli occupation had turned him into a "nomad" and expressed shock at the number of Jewish settlements around East Jerusalem.

The PLO and Israel broke a 29-year taboo when they recognised each other in the run-up to the autonomy accord that they signed on Sept. 13 in Washington.

Mr. Saeid left home for studies in Europe a year before Israel occupied East Jerusalem in the 1967 war.

He was prevented from coming home permanently under Israeli laws refusing all Palestinians the right to return and barred from even making a visit when he became a PLO member.

Under the September autonomy deal, Israel has agreed to consider allowing the permanent return of an undetermined number of Palestinians in 1967.

Mr. Saeid said he was neither searched nor questioned upon arrival at Ben Gurion airport near Tel Aviv. Monsignor Richard Matthes, representing the Vatican in Jerusalem, greeted Mr. Saeid, a Roman Catholic.

U.N. chief calls for safe return of missing Libyan

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Ghali expressed concern Friday over the apparent abduction in Cairo of Libyan dissident and former Foreign Minister Mansour Kikhia and urged Egyptian authorities to press their investigation.

"The secretary-general hopes that Mr. Kikhia will reappear safe and sound without delay," a statement issued through a U.N. spokesman said.

Mr. Kikhia, who once served as Libya's U.N. representative and later went into exile in Europe, disappeared after attending a meeting in Cairo early this month of the Arab Organisation for Human Rights (AOHR).

He stayed on after the conference because he has friends and relatives in Cairo but disappeared from his hotel last Saturday, an AOHR official there told Reuters.

"The secretary-general has been approached on the subject of Mr. Kikhia's disappearance and possible abduction by concerned non-governmental organisations," the spokesman said.

Dr. Ghali, a former Egyptian deputy prime minister, had contacted the Egyptian authorities and "encouraged them to pursue their investigation into the matter," he said.

Mr. Kikhia's family appealed to the Egyptian government Friday to do more to help solve the mystery of his disappearance.

At a news conference in Washington, two of Mr. Kikhia's daughters, his brother and a cousin said the Egyptian government had delayed four days before agreeing to investigate Mr. Kikhia's disappearance.

They said the U.S. and Saudi government had pressed Egypt to pursue the case. Libyan opposition leaders

fear that Mr. Kikhia, in exile since 1981, has been abducted by Libyan government agents.

The Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights said it has been told by a Libyan rights group that Mr. Kikhia was to meet a Libyan government official the night before he disappeared.

"The secretary-general hopes that Mr. Kikhia will reappear safe and sound without delay," a statement issued through a U.N. spokesman said.

They said they feared for Mr. Kikhia's health because he is a diabetic who must take insulin injections twice a day.

Mr. Kikhia's wife, Baha Kikhia, who lives in France, said a member of her husband's family told her on Wednesday by phone from Tripoli that her husband was now in Libya, according to the statement published by the Saudi daily Al Shara Al Awas.

Mr. Kikhia was a foreign minister under Col. Qadhafi from 1972 to 1975, and the Libyan representative at the United Nations from 1976 to 1980. He now lives in Paris where he is the secretary-general of a Libyan opposition group, the Rassemblement National (national rally).

In Cairo, an Interior Ministry spokesman said Thursday that Mr. Kikhia's case was "currently under investigation by security authorities."

The United States also expressed concern Friday about the disappearance of the Libyan dissident.

"We've been in touch with the government of Egypt, urged them to make every effort they can find out what happened," said State Department spokesman Michael McCurry.

The nine other channels are owned by Saudis: Four by

businessman Salaf Kameel, four by the Al Mawardi Company, and one by Prince Khaled Ben Sultan, who also owns the Arabic-language daily Al Hayat.

The new regulation sidelines the strongest channel, the Lachan Broadcasting Corporation (LBC), owned by the former Christian militia, the Lebanese Forces.

LBC signed an agreement with Prince Khaled to secure an outlet via Arabsat, but it could prove useless if the new decree takes effect.

LBC Director General Pierre Daher told reporters the decree was "tailor-made" to give a satellite broadcasting monopoly to a well-known channel and to bar us from satellite broadcasting."

The charge was echoed in the opposition daily Nidaa Al Watan, which ran an editorial with the headline: "General outcry against the proposed monopolisation of satellite broadcasts." It said, "business deals are struck, and the law is then fashioned accordingly."

Officials at Future TV said simply that they saw nothing untoward in reserving exclusive satellite transmission rights for Lebanese nationals.

Beirut moves to end television chaos

BEIRUT (AFP) — The Lebanese government has begun a drive to curb the proliferation of television channels in the country, where 48 private channels are already broadcasting illegally, some by satellite.

The family members said they had conflicting reports of the current whereabouts of Mr. Kikhia, 62, who had lived in Columbia, Missouri, since his abduction.

They said they feared for Mr. Kikhia's health because he is a diabetic who must take insulin injections twice a day.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

U.S. welcomes crackdown on settlers

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States Friday welcomed word Israeli soldiers had been ordered to crack down on Jewish settlers who attack Arabs in the occupied territories. "We recognise and welcome the fact that Israeli officials have made it clear that lawlessness will not be tolerated," said State Department spokesman Michael McCurry. Mr. McCurry said the United States renewed its call for Israelis and Palestinians alike "to promote the work that will lead to national reconciliation, to do everything possible to exercise maximum restraint and stop violence at a time when the peace process itself needs to be nurtured." The Israeli army said Thursday that its soldiers had been given orders to "take strong action against Jews engaged in illegal activities or who disturb the peace." The prospect of violence between soldiers and settlers has always been a sensitive issue in Israel, where almost every Jewish family has a member serving in the military. In many recent cases of settler unrest, soldiers have stood by — or in at least one televised incident, run away — when confronted by Jews shooting at Arabs. Settlers have rampaged through Palestinian towns and villages in response to attacks on Jews.

Hizbullah leader raps Vatican-Israel deal

BEIRUT (R) — The spiritual leader of Lebanon's Hizbullah criticised the Vatican on Friday for a deal it is expected to sign this month with Israel establishing full diplomatic ties. "This (agreement) gives the Zionists and Jews a big moral power in the world because the Vatican is recognising Israel atop the ruins of the Palestinian people," said Sheikh Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah in a sermon at a Beirut mosque. Sheikh Fadlallah — spiritual mentor of Hizbullah which is fighting Israel forces in South Lebanon and opposes Arab-Israeli peace talks — urged guerrillas in Palestine and Lebanon to launch more attacks against the Jewish state. "When the Vatican recognises Israel at a time when Israel has not given any concessions, this means Israel, will get greater power to oppress the Palestinians," Sheikh Fadlallah said. The deal would make Israel more stubborn about withdrawal from occupied Arab land, he added. Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said on Thursday that the agreement will be signed on Dec. 30. The Vatican, which supports a Palestinian homeland, has always recognised Israel's right to exist within secure borders. "It will give (Israel) power when the world's Catholics consider that Israel is right and the struggle in Lebanon and Palestine are wrong," Sheikh Fadlallah said.

Arafat urged to reinstate journalist

LONDON (R) — International anti-censorship group Article 19 urged Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat on Friday to reinstate a Cyprus-based Palestinian journalist it said had been unfairly dismissed by PLO officials in Tunis. The London-based group said in a letter to the Palestine Liberation Organisation chairman that it was deeply concerned about Hussaini Hijazi, who has lived in Cyprus since 1984 and wrote for the PLO official weekly Falastine Al Thawra. "Article 19 believes that Mr. Hijazi has been dismissed, and may be deported from Cyprus, for peacefully expressing his opinions and exercising his duty as a journalist," the letter made available to news organisations said. Article 19 said Mr. Hijazi had written an article for the London-based Arabic daily Al Hayat, published on July 26 this year, in which he discussed the PLO internal situation. It said the report "apparently displeased PLO officials in Tunis who decided to dismiss Mr. Hijazi." The Cypriot authorities, tipped off by the PLO officials, then told Mr. Hijazi his residence permit would not be renewed. "We therefore earnestly request your immediate intervention to ensure that Mr. Hijazi is reinstated to his job and that the threat of his expulsion from Cyprus is withdrawn," Article 19's letter concluded.

U.S. carrier battle group arrives in Gulf

MANAMA (R) — A group of U.S. warships led by the aircraft carrier Independence has arrived in the Gulf to enforce U.S. air patrols over southern Iraq, a U.S. navy spokesman said. Aircraft from the carrier have already begun training flights in connection with Operation Southern Watch air patrols, a navy spokesman for U.S. Central Command in Bahrain told Reuters. Carrier-based aircraft have not patrolled the southern marshes of Iraq since early October because carriers were diverted from the Gulf to Somalia. The battle group includes a nuclear submarine, a cruiser, two frigates and two ships carrying ammunition and oil. The air patrols started in August 1992, using planes from carriers and bases in Gulf Arab states with the aim of protecting the Shires of southern Iraq from alleged attacks by Iraqi government forces.

Turkish security forces seize hashish

ISTANBUL (R) — Turkish security forces

Home News

Government prepares to establish national oil and gas company

AMMAN (J.T.) — In implementation of guidelines contained in the Speech from the Throne before Parliament last month, the government is in the process of establishing a national oil and gas company to take over the role currently played by the Natural Resources Authority (NRA) in prospecting for oil and gas in Jordan, according to an announcement by NRA Director-General Fakhreddin Al Daghestani.

At present, the NRA is focusing its attention on the Lisan area, along the Dead Sea coast, where it has conducted seismological surveys, said Dr. Daghestani in a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

The NRA plans to issue a statement in the first quarter of 1994 giving details about the outcome of the seismological survey and, in its light, the decision will be taken whether to pursue test drilling the operations in the Lisan area or halt there, Dr. Daghestani continued.

Earlier this year, the NRA drilled a well on the Dead Sea coast where signs of crude oil surfaced, but due to the closeness of the well to the sea, water filtered and filled the well.

Currently, the NRA is drilling two other wells, further away from the old well, with the purpose of determining the geological strata surrounding the three wells, Dr. Daghestani added.

In addition, he said, the Jordanian government last July signed a contract with the South Korean firm Hanbo to prospect for crude oil in the Rishah and Wadi Sarhan areas.

The NRA is also focusing on the Rishah area, close to the border with Iraq, where natural gas is being exploited, he pointed out.

The Rishah fields provide nearly eight per cent of Jordan's overall energy requirements, or 20 per cent of the Kingdom's electric power consumption, according to Dr. Daghestani.

This is a relatively small amount but the NRA is drilling another well south of Al Rishah fields in order to find out if additional gas reserves exist there, he said.

Altogether, he added, 27 wells have been drilled in the Rishah area to date but some of them are unproductive.

In his Speech from the Throne, delivered Nov. 23, His Majesty King Hussein said that "the government has continued oil and gas explorations in the Rishah and Dead Sea regions. It has expanded the capacity of the Rishah gas, operated power turbines and measures are being taken to establish a national oil and gas company.

Referring to the oil shale which is found in abundance in some parts of Jordan, Dr.

Daghestani said that the NRA has been conducting studies on the shale since the 1970s with the purpose of utilising it as an alternative source for oil. But, he noted, the cost of producing one barrel of shale oil proved to be costly, amounting to \$30, which makes the whole process economically unfeasible.

Dr. Daghestani highlighted the importance of the Dead Sea noting that its contents represent a real treasure for the Kingdom.

According to the NRA chief, the Dead Sea area could be used as health spa while the water could be a source for chemical products for various industries.

Dr. Daghestani referred to the fertilizers company in Aqaba and pointed out that it was consuming some one million tonnes of raw minerals in the course of producing the fertilizers.

He said that the Arab Potash Company (APC) could make better use of the Dead Sea minerals by establishing companies specialising in the production of bromine, magnesium oxide and other products.

Asked on the prospect of exploiting copper, Dr. Daghestani said that Jordan has very limited quantities of this mineral and, in view of the current world copper prices, refining of copper in Jordan is unfeasible.

Referring to the oil shale which is found in abundance in some parts of Jordan, Dr.

NGOs urge governments to uphold children's rights

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Under the title: "Together for the sake of the child," Arab human rights activists Saturday welcomed a call for cooperation with the Arab governments to put the UN convention on the rights of the child into operation.

At the start of a two-day seminar on the best methods to promote Arab children's rights and the role which non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should adopt to promote these rights, representatives of different Arab human rights organisations agreed that there should be continuous cooperation and coordination between the governments and the NGOs.

"It is a matter of attitude," said Huda Badran, president of the Cairo-based Arab Women's Association at the opening session of the seminar that was organised by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). "All governments earn to upgrade their (human rights) status... and they won't object to improvements if the approach (by the NGOs) was that of help and not of control."

Ms. Badran, who delivered a speech on the need of implementing the convention of the child in the Arab World, was responding to one of the questions raised in conflicts that exist between governments on the one hand and NGOs on the other.

"There is a clear conflict between governments and NGOs that we can't ignore," said Egyptian Fawzi Farghali, executive commissioner of Arab Scout Movement. We need to adopt a stand in which the child has to be separated from the conflict arena."

Amin Mekki from the Cairo-based Arab Lawyers' Union pointed out that "partnership" between governments and NGOs is a difficult task to achieve. The conflict, for example, that exists between a certain government and a minority in that country is going to necessarily influence the rights of the child.

From Iraq, Manal Yunis, president of the General Federation of Iraqi Women, said that the main problem lies in the way in which this coordination can be achieved.

"Coordination is possible and is needed because NGOs possess more precise information, are more aware of the issues at stake and are more in touch with the people," Ms. Yunis said. "But it (coordination) is difficult. What we really need is to define a plan of action to follow."

Participants in the first day of the seminar also stressed on the need to address the rights of girls as one of the priorities of the meeting. Some indicated that the discrimination between boys and girls leads to major ills in the society; for example, high illiteracy rate among women more than men.

"As much as the discrimination gap narrows between boys

and girls as much as we witness more development and progress in that country," said Ms. Badran. "Arab countries, discrimination exists since birth is mostly reflected in the parents' preference to educate the boy rather than the girl."

Irqi children's suffering due to the imposed embargo on the country and its influence on the women and children was also a topic for discussion. Sa'adoun Khalifeh, president of the Family Planning Association in Iraq, pointed out in a working paper to the wretched conditions of Iraqi children and the increasing number of deaths in the past three years.

According to Mr. Khalifeh, the number of deaths among Iraqi children reached 317,583 from 1990 until the end of June this year.

"Those who were born after the embargo do not know the taste of sweets... they only hear about them in films and pictures," he said. "There should be a humanitarian effort that would put an end to injustice and cruelty that brought death to the Iraqi children."

UNICEF's regional director, Sarojini Vittachi expressed hope that coordination and cooperation would be strengthened among governments, NGOs and the people to "monitor and implement human rights goals," and that the role of NGOs should be a complementary one to the government rather than confrontational.

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"As much as the discrimination gap narrows between boys

Al Quds Open University denies sale report

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A committee representing the workers of the Amman-based Al Quds Open University (QOU) has denied earlier reports alleging that the university is being sold to Ahmad Tamimi, an Arab-American living in the United States, and stressed that QOU could remain as a Palestinian entity contributing to the educational objectives of the Palestinian people.

"Dr. Tamimi has reached a contract with QOU to buy its programmes which can be later marketed to Arab communities living in America," according to committee chairman Khaled Ismael.

He told the Jordan Times, which had published the earlier report, that sale of the university has never been contemplated and that this week's two-hour sit-in staged by some 80 QOU workers was aimed primarily at urging the Palestinian leadership and the world community to help the university to serve its status and pursue its noble mission.

"We have reason to believe that the financial and other problems facing the university are on the way towards a satisfac-

tory solution," said Mr. Hossaini in an interview, but he declined to elaborate.

The workers, who staged the protest Tuesday, issued a statement noting that QOU, which has been providing distance education to 4,000 Palestinian students, was facing the consequences of a financial suspension of Arab and international aid since the Gulf war.

The crisis, said the statement, deprived the workers of their salaries for more than five months, denied the freelance teachers their pay, caused production of programmes to cease, prevented QOU from opening branches in Arab states, halted Jordan Television educational programmes beamed to Palestinian students and led to the resignation of many QOU teachers.

The statement, a copy of which was handed to the Jordan Times, noted that the workers and their families were facing a difficult time while the students' future hung in balance.

It said that a memorandum listing the grievances have been sent to Palestine President Yasser Arafat urging him to give priority to finding sufficient funds for QOU programmes and pay workers their salaries. The memorandum

appealed to wealthy Palestinians and the European Community to extend aid to QOU and urged the Gulf states to release frozen funds allocated for QOU.

The QOU project, which was launched in 1985, was in response to a real need for higher education among the Palestinians in the occupied territories and the diaspora.

At the request of the Palestine National Fund (PNF) and with assistance from the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, UNESCO completed the project's feasibility study in 1980 and QOU was inaugurated in late 1985.

QOU has been preparing multi-media distance education learning materials designed by academic staff and assisted by experts from local universities and from distance education institutions in other nations.

QOU, the only distance education university in the Arab World, was primarily established to serve the Palestinian students but, once resources and circumstances permitted, there were plans for enrolments from other Arab countries.

However, the current financial strait has temporarily halted expansion plans.

Peacekeepers and PSD officers get Royal medals

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein, the Supreme Commander of the Jordanian Armed Forces has conferred Jordanian "peacekeeping medals" on PSD officers participating in the U.N. peacekeeping forces in Croatia and Cambodia.

Public Security Department (PSD) Director General Abdul Rahman Al Udwan presented the medals to a group of officers representing the units taking in the peacekeeping mission during a special ceremony held at the PSD headquarters Saturday.

Brigadier Mubammad Tarazi, the PSD assistant chief for judicial affairs, delivered an

address noting that the anniversary serves as means of honouring all policemen in the Arab World.

He stressed that the occasion gives impetus to the PSD to exert all efforts towards continued modernisation of its system and ensuring stability and security for the Jordanian people.

Gen. Udwan also attended a ceremony in Amman, Saturday, in observance of Arab Police Day.

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He expressed hope that the honouring of the officers would give them further incentives for further sacrifices.

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Haunting crossing points

OF ALL the disputes that arose between the PLO and Israel in the wake of their Sept. 13 accord on interim self-rule, the control over border crossings between Jericho and Jordan, on the one hand, and between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, on the other, may prove to be the most difficult. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is showing insensitivity to the request of the Palestinian side to exercise meaningful supervision of border points in the Jericho enclave and Gaza due to his well-known obsession with security for his country. It is of course possible that the Israeli prime minister is exhibiting toughness and inflexibility just for the sake of domestic political reasons. But the cycle of violence that surged in the wake of the Palestinian-Israeli deal has, no doubt, also complicated matters for the two sides.

The Palestinians' view is totally different from Rabin's since their control over border crossings is the least acceptable manifestation of any semblance of sovereignty over the small territories that Israel has agreed to yield to them on the basis of the Gaza-Jericho first formula. Otherwise, these tiny areas would become mere enclaves surrounded by Israeli soldiers with no apparent freedom to go one inch beyond the dictates of the Israeli military regime. Small wonder then that Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij lamented the failure of the Rabin government to give the PLO effective supervision over the border points and described the situation without such an Israeli concession as untenable for and an enslavement of his people.

Given the diametrically opposed perspectives on this thorny issue, there is a growing fear that all the accomplishments of the past three months on the Palestinian-Israeli front could unravel. From the looks of things, Rabin is not likely to budge on this matter. Likewise, PLO leader Yasser Arafat cannot afford to appear as having made yet another big concession to Israel at a time when he is already beleaguered and injured due to his signature of the Sept. 13 agreement. Two possible scenarios are left for the two parties to contemplate: Either to reach a deadlock, which is in neither party's interest, or accept a reasonable compromise that would leave both camps with some sort of coordinated control over the border crossings during the envisaged interim period. As long as what is sought for the time being is a temporary resolution of the problem, till there is final settlement of the Palestinian question, the latter option would appear the lesser evil. With this understanding in mind, the entire peace package already attained between the PLO and the Rabin government must not be allowed to slip away. There are very high stakes in the September peace accord and an important issue as the border issue should be temporarily resolved for the sake of the higher objectives of lasting peace in the region.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I daily Saturday called on the Arab negotiators with Israel to re-consider the whole Middle East process because it is clear now that from its stand with regard to the Oslo deal with the PLO the Israelis are seeking to gain more time and win the world community's support for their policies which are hostile to the interests of the Arab World. Of course, the PLO leadership is to blame for signing documents considered as incomplete, ambiguous and unclear, thus opening the way for a different interpretation by the Rabin government, said the paper. It is to be regretted now that some of us have trusted the Israeli intentions and confided in the United States which served as a guarantor of the PLO-Israeli deal regarding the Gaza-Jericho first option, continued the paper. It is now clear for all that the Rabin government is striving to embarrass the PLO leadership, which can not draw back from the Oslo deal and for which it is impossible to give more concessions to the Israelis in view of the strong internal Palestinian opposition, the paper added. It seems that Israel is continuing the drive to reduce to a minimum the Palestinian gains so that it can guarantee that the autonomy rule remains an easy prey for the Israeli government and easy to control and contain, added the daily. It said that there is no alternative for the PLO leadership but to turn back to the Arab World for backing, to enable it to handle the Israeli manoeuvres and coordinate all its steps with those of other Arab parties to the peace process.

MERE TALK about a teachers' association in Jordan can by no means satisfy the teachers' needs or convince them that the government or Parliament are taking steps to help safeguard their interests, said a columnist in Al Ra'i daily. For the past three years, the teachers have been struggling to set up a union to help protect their interests and help them improve their salaries and working conditions, said Bader Abdul Haq. The reply to all this was the creation of the so-called Teachers' Club and promises by Parliament that it would work out a set of regulations helping the teachers to establish their union, said the writer.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

How to survive Israeli competition

Normalisation of economic relations with Israel is definitely coming. It will be one of the conditions for peace between Israel and any Arab country. Therefore, we should find out whether the Jordanian industry is able to survive the competition of the Israeli industrial products or whether it will shrink and be crowded out of its markets by the Israeli industry. To answer this crucial question we should first state four obvious facts:

First is that Israel is an industrial country and belongs to the "first world" while Jordan is a developing country of the Third World — As a rule, the manufactured products of developing countries are not able to compete on equal footing with the products of the industrialised countries without protection.

Second is the fact that the Jordanian industries are not able to stand competition of foreign imports in the domestic market. That is why the Jordanian infant industry was given a customs protection of 30 per cent as a minimum and 50 per cent as a maximum. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) which is known to advocate free trade, recognised this fact and admitted that the above level of protection is justified in order for the Jordanian industry to survive.

Third is the fact that the Israeli economy is heavily subsidised. In fact, it is by far the most subsidised economy in the world. Israel receives unrequited transfers of around \$6 billion a year from various sources, prominent among whom are America and Germany. The competition between the two economies is therefore unfair.

Fourth is the fact that Israel proved during the 45 years since its inception that it is not a normal state with defined boundaries. It is rather an expansionist Zionist project. Strengthening the Israeli economy may tempt Israel to enter another round of geographic expansion bid at the expense of Arab land, either through wars or by other means.

We have no reason to volunteer to strengthen the Israeli economy and enhance its economic base until Israeli rulers prove through action not words that they have abandoned expansionary designs and converted Israel into a normal peaceful state with recognised borders, just like the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) was required to abandon its charter calling for the dismantling of Israel.

If Israel needed five years of transitional period to test the intentions and good will of the Palestinians we need the same period to make sure that Israel is no more a security threat.

These facts do not only imply the answer, they also indicate the remedy. The Jordanian industry is unable to stand the competition of the Israeli industry without protection. The remedy is to apply the custom protection measures, now in force towards all foreign imports, without giving Israeli exports any extra advantage over the imports from other trade partners, such as Germany, Japan, U.S., Turkey etc. Normalisation of economic relations should mean treating Israel like any other foreign country without discrimination: No free trade area, no common market and no custom union.

Jordan should not wait until after an accord is reached with Israel. Customs posts should be installed immediately on the bridges. The bridges must be treated as an international border point, just like our borders with Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, as far as customs and passports are concerned. This step is overdue. Any hesitation or delay will be at the expense of Jordan's national interests.

Jordan, as a sovereign state, should assert its authority on the bridges and put an end to the current situation, where Israel has been deciding, unilaterally, what is permitted and what is not to cross, and in what direction when it comes to the movement of people and goods for the last 26 years.



The violence among us

By Bernd Hüppauf

Violence and acts of brutality are going on in every corner of the world at this moment. Wars and civil wars that no one seems to have the power or determination to stop — in the former Yugoslavia, in Georgia and Azerbaijan, in Northern Ireland, in Nigeria — continue unabated. And what might be called the undeclared wars in our cities, from Los Angeles to Johannesburg, also spiral out of control.

I do not have a solution to this pervasive manifestation of violence. But it seems to me that if we frame our idea of violence as an aberration, a deviation from the path of normality, we are making a profound error. We run the risk of unwittingly justifying neglect of whole segments of society while ignoring the increasing power of violence generated by society itself, which in modern life increasingly seems to isolate and brutalise the individual. We cannot hope to solve the problem of escalating violence until we have redefined the concept of violence and changed our perception of it.

Recent scholarship suggests that the world has never seen a region or a period without violence. In all previous cultures it appears to have been accepted as part of a natural or God-given order. Violent acts were endemic and normal.

In the 18th century, with the industrial and political revolutions and the emancipation of the individual, perceptions changed: The Enlightenment "denaturalised" violence. It became an act that was unacceptable in society, and as it could not be justified before the court of reason, the objective of a society free from violence began to

emerge. People began to speak of a utopia: a civilised society (to use Kant's phrase) in eternal peace.

But this denaturalisation of violence required a new concept of "legitimate" violence. The end of its natural history led to the emancipation of violence from mythical and religious significance. Violence was turned into a means; it was freed from traditional limits, and, now defined as a response to unlawful rule and domination, it was justified even before the court of reason.

This legitimisation of violence produced not only the Other — the perpetrator of "bad" violence — but gave rise to the pervasive forms of violence we think of as characteristic of modern life. This ubiquitous aggression, which we may experience at home, in a factory or at school, has been called structural violence.

By the end of the 19th century, production had become conflated with destruction, and the economies of industrial societies were increasingly based on the destruction of landscapes, lives and property. Technology provided the pattern not only for economic progress but also modern warfare.

Consider typical photographs from World War I. With the proud gestures of factory owners or of merchants in front of their stores. German officers posed on huge piles of rubble. Standing on the ruins of blown-up houses and forts, these officers demonstrate to the viewer the astounding success of modern armaments, made possible with the latest technological innovations.

At the same time, we find it

difficult to accept that violence belongs to times and places that are not ours, or to early childhood before we are properly socialised, we are victims of a perception incongruous with the reality in which we live. Our idea of modernity — and as a result, our perception of ourselves and our world

— could turn out to be untenable.

To abandon the idea that western civilisation is en route to a world of peace does harm to our pride, but we must take a critical view of the possibility of eliminating war and violence. Yet accepting that the world will not be free from violence is not the same as accepting violence. Paradoxically, letting go of the ideal of eternal peace may increase our ability to make peace.

The Israelis and the Palestinians who fought each other for almost a century have agreed to move decisively on the path of dialogue, understanding and cooperation.... I want to tell the Palestinian delegation that we are sincere, that we mean business....

"We will need more courage and determination to continue the course of building co-existence and peace between us.... Such a shift will give us an opportunity to embark upon the process of economic, social and cultural growth and development."

These statements, the first by Shimon Peres and the second by Yasser Arafat, made at the signing of the Middle East pact on Sept. 13, were concrete and practical; they did not refer to a vision of a world free from violence and war.

It is not the time now to echo the grand vision of human perfectibility and historical progression. The end of the utopian ideal of eternal peace should not only be interpreted as a loss but also as an act of liberation. It is time that new insights into the violence structure of our psyches and of modern society be turned to committing concrete and localised acts of peace — The New York Times.

Dynamics of peace — give and take which could bring conciliation

By Michael Jansen

THE POSTPONEMENT

from Dec. 12 to Dec. 22-23 and then the postponement for at least "three weeks", in the estimate of Israeli officials, of the signing of an agreement between the PLO and Israel on implementation of the Declaration of Principles negotiated in Oslo and signed in Washington on Sept. 13 has more to do with traditional Zionist/Israeli claims to the "land" of Palestine than the preservation of "Israeli survival" and "Israeli security."

Israel is, and has been for three decades, the predominant military power in the Middle East. Its "survival", therefore, has not been a real issue since the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948, and even then the fledgling Jewish state was not fighting for its existence from a position of strength vis-à-vis its Arab neighbours but from a position of strength.

But because Israelis define the "security" of their state as the ability of Israeli military and police forces to guarantee the safety of all Jews living within the territories Israel controls, Israeli leaders claim that the "security of the Jewish state is under threat" if Jews are being threatened, assaulted and killed by Palestinians. And this threat provides an excuse for postponement.

"The Israelis have not yet realised that the Arabs' price for peace is return of land the Israelis cannot imagine themselves relinquishing. They continue to believe that they can make a deal without giving up control and sovereignty over 'The Land'. This is why on Dec. 13 Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin refused to make conciliatory gesture towards the Palestinians in order to maintain momentum in the peace process. He and his colleagues still do not understand the dynamics of peacemaking, the process of give and take which would bring peace and conciliation."

The method of defining threat — and regarding security — masks an historical Zionist/Israeli mind-set on the issue of "the land of Israel" which governs the thinking of a majority of Israelis and the key figures in the present Labour-led coalition. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres belong to the independence generation of Israeli leaders for whom "land" acquired by Jews became inalienably "Jewish", holy "land" promised the Jews by their tribal God, Yahweh.

There is a solid psychological barrier in the minds of such men to handing over any land, even one inch of land, to the Palestinians. So they, following in the footsteps of the nationalist camp led by the Likud, can be expected to resist for as long as possible the transfer of control over territory, any portion of the land to the PLO.

There are a number of aspects to control, all of which involve sovereignty. The person who pointed out this fact was Shulamit Aloni, head of the Meretz Party, the most concessionary faction in the present Israeli coalition. And even she was not prepared to grant the PLO "sovereignty" over any portion of the land which Israel claims.

The first aspect is control of the crossing points from the neighbouring Arab countries into Gaza and the West Bank. Israel says it should retain control, citing the agreement at Oslo that Israel should be in charge of external security. The PLO, however, says that Israel should not be in a position to open and close the doors to the territories. Therefore, there should be joint Israeli, PLO and international control. Israel has rejected this idea because it wants to use its control of the frontiers of the territories through the stationing of forces along those frontiers to maintain its sovereignty over those territories.

Israeli spokesmen make their intentions crystal clear when they say that they must decide who enters Israel through the crossing points. The Israelis have not yet got it into their heads that hand-

ing over territory to the Palestinians means a renunciation of sovereignty over such territory.

The second aspect is the size of the Jericho enclave. This also involves sovereignty. Israel is prepared to cede the Jericho municipality and the neighbouring, largely empty, refugee camps amounting to 35 square-kilometres of territory. But the PLO demands the handing over of the entire Jericho subdistrict, defined as the British mandate, of some 350 square-kilometres. A Palestinian entity in the West Bank comprising 350 square-kilometres could claim the attribute of sovereignty while a city enclave of only 35 square kilometres could not.

The third aspect is control over roads used by Jewish settlers in both the West Bank and Gaza and the fourth is the Israeli army's right of pursuit of Palestinian activists into Palestinian-held areas after the Israeli withdrawal. Both involve sovereignty.

The other issue which causes Israel problems in the negotiations with the PLO is the problem of defining boundaries, deciding where Israel begins and ends. Since the Versailles Peace conference in 1919, at which the Zionists presented maps of their future state, they have been extremely reluctant to delineate the precise boundaries.

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One of the founding fathers of the Jewish state, Norman Bentwich, said that the borders of Israel should be like the skin of an animal which expands in times of plenty and shrinks in times of want. Any handing over of territory to the Palestinians signifies not only shrinkage but an eventual drawing of boundaries limiting the expansion of the skin of the Jewish state and challenging the mind-set of the majority of Israelis and their leaders.

The Israelis have not yet realised that the Arabs' price for peace is return of land the Israelis cannot imagine themselves relinquishing. They continue to believe that they can make a deal without giving up control and sovereignty over "The Land". This is why on Dec. 13 Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin refused to make a conciliatory or compensatory gesture towards the Palestinians — by releasing prisoners or making a token withdrawal — in order to maintain the momentum in the peace process. He and his colleagues still do not understand the dynamics of peacemaking, the process of give and take which could bring peace and conciliation.

And Israel's refusal to come to terms and act in accordance with what can be called the "spirit" of making peace cannot but have a negative impact on negotiations between the Jewish state and its other Arab interlocutors. Prevarication and protracted negotiations do not create a climate of confidence. As the Palestinian problem is the core of the Arab dispute with Israel, lack of progress on the Palestinian track could mean stalemate on the other three tracks in the negotiations.

Features

JORDAN TIMES, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1993 5

Conservation of architectural heritage is a duty for all

By Samer G. Bagaaen

AMMAN — The symposium on the Conservation of Architectural Heritage in Jordan and the Arab World concluded, Nov. 24, at the University of Jordan's Department of Architecture of the Engineering and Technology Faculty.

The papers that were presented, encompassing both national and international expertise and experience, have raised issues that are of interest not only to architects, but also to sociologists, anthropologists, archaeologists and economists. The role societies play,

in processes such as conservation as a social development process were cited with reference to particular international experiences.

The introductory paper scrutinised the criteria by which sites were selected for inclusion on the UNESCO's World Heritage List. Other papers examined the urban aspects of conservation at the neighbourhood and city levels.

Another theme was the subject of symbols or abstracting the traditional language of design into modernist design traditions. The relationships and interactions between conservation and tourism, labeled "toy-town syndrome" and "en-

gagement in voyeurism" were also pondered upon and debated.

The subject of public interaction with either conservation or preservation was raised over and over again by many of the speakers. Questions raised included: How can people — the public — be aware of heritage and conservation and contribute to the debate when the forums through which they can express either pleasure or displeasure with their built environment do not exist? or: Why is it that where these forums exist, they are not easily accessible?

Decentralisation of decision-making processes in our cities

and the adoption of flexible visions for future urban expansion instead of an inflexible master plan were proposed as the alternative vision. This new vision also promises to chart future progress within the social and economic domains that will supplement this future expansion.

But what should the role of the architect be in this new managerial structure that proposes to deal with archaeological, urban and rural conservation?

One of the symposium's recommendations suggested that the architect be subsumed into a proposed council for the protection of heritage, a trust en-

trusted with the task of coordinating between the numerous ministries, agencies and institutions that are concerned with conservation.

It was also proposed that this council include politicians, anthropologists, economists, archaeologists and sociologists so as to have the authority to enforce any recommendations or proposals that it might want to.

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1993: An historic breakthrough toward peace in N. Ireland

By Allen Nachman
Agence France Presse

LONDON — Britain's admission in late November that it had, contrary to all public views, been secretly dealing with the outlawed Irish Republican Army (IRA) for most of 1993 hit like a thunderbolt.

It forced Prime Minister John Major to eat the words he had uttered with indignation in the House of Commons only weeks earlier, that talking with the IRA "would turn my stomach."

It also kicked up scathing denunciation from all directions and for a time appeared to cancel all bets and put the Ulster peace process back to square one.

But as the dust settled and the year wound down, there were signs that the seeds of an historic breakthrough in ending a quarter century of sectarian bloodshed in Northern Ireland had been sown.

Northern Ireland Secretary Patrick Mayhew, despite acrid exchanges with the IRA's Sinn Fein political wing over revelations of the secret exchanges, made an unprecedented offer in the House of Commons. If the IRA "unequivocally" renounces violence, "exploratory" talks could begin the first in January.

The revelation of secret IRA contacts nearly scuttled London's peace talks with Dublin, which under the 1985 Anglo-Irish accord was entitled to a say in any dealings concerning Northern Ireland.

Irish Premier Albert Reynolds was infuriated at

having been kept in the dark about the IRA talks, and worse, at learning that London had been passing information about their own private meetings on to the IRA.

Deep wounds festered between the Catholic IRA and London, between London and Dublin, between London and the majority Protestant Unionists who fear Britain will loosen its claim on Northern Ireland.

But as Christmas approached, there was an almost palpable sense that, with the secret out of the bag, some terrible yoke had been lifted that would allow peace talks to shift into a higher gear.

After a quarter-century of sectarian warfare that killed more than 3,100, injured 35,000 and left a gentle, pastoral land torn asunder, peace seemed finally in sight.

The year produced a high and a low in the Northern Ireland conflict: the single bloodiest month in 17 years — 28 dead in October — and the first proof the government was dealing with those it termed "terrorists."

"The disclosure puts positions out in the open and they become part of the political process," said Ulster University political science Professor Paul Arthur.

The realities were more complex.

With everything out in the open, Mr. Major found himself walking a tightrope, viewed with suspicion by Catholics, Protestants and the Dublin government alike.



another Unionist hardliner. "So it's understandable that some people are turning to violence to defend the union. If they believe that the British are about to abandon them, you can expect more violence," said the official.

The Irish premier, despite his initial bitterness, has held two meetings with Mr. Major, the latest one during Friday's E.C. summit meeting in Brussels.

Officials said the two would meet again, possibly next week in London, and Irish diplomats suggested some elements of a peace plan might be announced.

"The truth is that in England, Scotland and Wales only a politically insignificant minority cares a fig about the future of Northern Ireland," said the Independent on Sunday.

"People want an end to wrecked shopping centres and maimed children, an end to security alerts and bag searches, an end to the sheer tedium of hearing and reading about it."

Politics muddy efforts to save dolphins

By Penelope Hocking-Vigie
Reuter

ANTIBES, France — Red tape and politics are hampering efforts to save thousands of Mediterranean dolphins that die each year in lethal drift-nets.

Made of nylon of the same density as water, the huge nets used for tuna fishing cannot be detected by the dolphins' sensory system and an estimated 8,000 are trapped every year.

France, Italy and Monaco promised a year ago to set up a 73,000 square kilometres sanctuary in the western Mediterranean to protect the graceful marine mammals.

Political considerations, bureaucracy and lack of money have prevented their "declaration of intent" from being implemented.

Experts from the seven western Mediterranean countries — France, Monaco, Italy, Spain, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco — met recently in the French Riviera resort of Antibes to discuss how to turn good intentions into reality.

The seminar was organised by the Antibes-based Association for the creation of an international Maritime Reserve in the Western Mediterranean (RIMMO) whose first international conference in October last year called for the sanctuary.

RIMMO says about five per cent of the Mediterranean dolphin population — as well as whales and turtles — dies in the nets every year.

Algerian presidency

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Kehir also demanded the lifting of laws passed during nearly two years of emergency rule, setting up a consultative group of government and opposition members, trying those responsible for repression against the opposition, and talks with the FIS in a neutral venue.

Over the last month the authorities have hinted they were willing to include FIS people or those close to the party in talks to chart Algeria's path to

sections of the U.S. convention to support a treaty banning drift-net fishing within the sanctuary.

The European Community imposes a maximum net length of 2.5 kilometres on member states but an increasing number of Asian boats — mainly Japanese and South Korean — are attracted as much by tuna as by legal loopholes and use huge nets.

"It's particularly absurd since they've banned drift-net fishing in their own waters," Mr. Riddell said.

Four Asian tuna trawlers were seen deploying more than 100 kilometres of drift-nets near Sardinia last summer while the captain of a French navy vessel looked on helplessly.

To persuade political leaders they need to act quickly, scientists must gather information on the numbers of animals concerned. But they lack the money to conduct effective surveys.

"The ideal solution would be to divide up the Mediterranean into 200-mile zones," Mr. Riddell said. "But the 18 countries concerned cannot find an agreement which pleases everyone."

Law Professor Alain Piquemal, chairman of the seminar's Legal Committee, said the Mediterranean was too small for each country to claim a 200-mile zone.

"There are too many conflicting interests, and there would be almost no high seas left," he said.

He said the sanctuary declaration had little legal force and the signatories could use

makes a sharp distinction between this party as such and the Islamist movement in which it has its roots," APS said, citing sources close to the commission.

"One should not lose sight of the fact that many ex-FIS militants are not terrorists and condemn violence," APS added.

"The ex-FIS militants and those in the Islamist movement who found themselves within this organisation thus have as much right as anyone else to participate in the dialogue."

An Algiers court in March 1992 banned the FIS.

'American interest in Islam growing'

By Rosalind Marlene Murphy

tion is "open to people of all religious, cultural and racial backgrounds."

"Unless we show that kind of diversity ourselves, we can't hope to be credible when we teach diversity to other people," he said.

Participants in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and the UAE raised the issue of President Clinton's recent meeting with British author Salman Rushdie in the context of interfaith understanding. (Rushdie is under an Iranian death sentence for blaspheming Islam; his novel "The Satanic Verses" is banned in Saudi Arabia.)

In Defence of the White House decision, Mr. Gell said the U.S. remains "open to a wide variety of views... no matter how hurtful those views may be seen by some groups." The issue of free speech "plays strongly in American society," he stressed, and is "guaranteed by the First Amendment" of the U.S. Constitution. In meeting with Mr. Rushdie, the president was, in effect "speaking for Americans in espousing the view of free speech," Mr. Gell asserted.

This view of free speech may not be seen the same way in other parts of the world," Mr. Gell noted, so it is important for Americans "to be sensitive to other groups." Americans have a "difficult time recognising that keep the British on tenterhooks."

The National Conference of Christians and Jews, founded in 1927, works to promote a greater understanding in the United States of different religions and cultures, Mr. Gell said. He noted that the name of the conference is no longer accurate in that the organisa-

WASHINGTON — Interest in learning more about Islam and the Muslim community is growing in the United States, two advocates of interfaith relations said December 13. This interest, they say, has been spawned by heightened awareness of the need for understanding and dialogue among religious groups in America.

Mustafa Malik, director of research for the American Muslim Council, and Stephen Gell, a member of the board of directors of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, discussed interfaith tolerance during a WorldNet television dialogue with participants in Abu Dhabi, Beirut and Riyadh. Arab participants included journalists and government officials.

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Asia, Middle East focus of S. African tourism drive

JOHANNESBURG (R) — South Africa, emerging from decades of apartheid isolation, is turning to the Middle East, Asia and other African countries to bolster the fortunes of its post-sanctions tourism industry.

But more emphasis needed to be placed on levels of service and personal safety which the South African Tourist Board said were "still not viewed in a positive light by the majority of tourists."

"Visitors today accept that when you travel to many countries it can be a fairly hazardous exercise... violence here is largely concentrated in areas not frequented by tourists," board executive director Spencer Thomas told Reuters.

"While visitors are not (usually) mugged or attacked they feel a sense of unease," Mr. Thomas said.

Despite the violence, the numbers of foreign visitors rose by more than 10 per cent in the first nine months of the year, compared to the same period in 1992, the board said.

And while the number of visitors from traditional markets including Britain, Israel and Holland rose only slightly

or declined in the same period, the numbers from India soared by over 47 per cent.

The numbers of visitors from Zambia, once one of "white" South Africa's most vociferous foes, increased by 38 per cent.

"As a result of the imminent new political dispensation in South Africa, there has been an encouraging increase in the number of visitors to the country," said tourism board chairman Piet Van Hoven, referring to next April's universal franchise election ending more than three centuries of white

domination.

Mr. Van Hoven said the numbers of visitors from other African states were expected to rise in the short term as "South Africa now plays an increasingly important role in the continent in terms of trade and technology."

The consistent growth in the Asian tourist market is an indication of its tremendous potential. Growth in business traffic of 33.9 per cent from Taiwan was recorded. India, Malaysia and Singapore are also showing increasing interest in South Africa as a long-haul destination," the board said in a statement.

ties flying into South Africa. Seventeen African airlines now fly into Johannesburg and 22 links have recently been established with the Gulf States, India, Pakistan and Middle Eastern and Asian countries.

"I have already visited several new markets, including the United Arab Emirates, Cyprus, Kenya, Tunisia and Zambia. I will also visit India in the near future," said Mr. Stathakis.

Figures just released by the board showed the numbers of business visitors rose by more than 23 per cent in the January to September period over 1992.

The board said markets showing exceptional growth included Germany, the United States, Australia and Taiwan.

"The consistent growth in the Asian tourist market is an indication of its tremendous potential. Growth in business traffic of 33.9 per cent from Taiwan was recorded. India, Malaysia and Singapore are also showing increasing interest in South Africa as a long-haul destination," the board said in a statement.

Prices have dropped about 30 per cent this year to five years of about \$14 a barrel.

Iranian statement have blamed the most recent downturn on the high output of producers outside the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) at a time when world recession has dampened demand.

In particular, they have studiously avoided blaming fellow OPEC member Saudi Arabia and other big Gulf Arab producers which Iran's Islamic

leaders usually denounced as agents of U.S. policies in previous oil market crises.

"There is no analysis pointing to the United States preparing military action against us. If the United States does that, the biggest loser will be itself," Mr. Nataq-Nouri said.

"But for a political or economic offensive it does not need new preparations because it is already busy doing it," he said, citing the oil issue, criticism of Iran for its human rights record, and the death order against British novelist Salman Rushdie.

The budget committee of parliament's upper house this

Higher taxes urged to trim Australian unemployment

CANBERRA (R) — A government report has urged Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating to raise new taxes for a job creation drive to tackle one of the industrialised world's worst unemployment rates.

Proposals by a panel of experts created by Mr. Keating in May aimed at attacking long-term unemployment and slashing the jobless rate to five per cent by the year 2000.

The panel said its programmes would slash the pool of long-term unemployed to 90,000 by the year 2000 from 440,000 currently while fundamentally reshaping the country's labour market.

The wide-ranging proposals, which include creating jobs in the private sector for six to nine months for the unemployed and revamping social

security programmes, will be considered for the government's budget statement in May.

"We are starting to see aggregate employment pick up but what we will not see, unless the government and the community focus on this problem, is those jobs being undertaken by the long-term unemployed," Mr. Keating told parliament.

But the proposals outlined in the 241-page draft strategy entitled "restoring full employment" are expensive and could put the government in the uncomfortable position of either raising taxes or trimming back other government programmes.

The total cost of the panel's proposals could be as much as 1.3 billion Australian dollars

(\$875 million) in the year to June 1995, rising to 2 billion Australian dollars (\$1.3 billion) a year for the following two fiscal years, the seven-member panel said.

"I think the way the government has embraced the report is blatant hypocrisy," opposition leader John Hewson told parliament. "These are the people that created the one million unemployed."

Australia has one of the worst unemployment rates in the industrialised world, standing at 11.1 per cent in November and near last year's record high 11.3 per cent.

Mr. Keating said the rate would remain relatively high even as the economy strengthened in the mid-1990s unless those out of work for more than a year returned to the

workforce.

The report said without such programmes, Australia risked an unemployment rate of around seven per cent by 2000 if the economy continued expanding at its current pace.

To reach the goal of five per cent unemployment — the target of Switzerland and the Netherlands — Australia needed economic growth of between 4.5 and five per cent, the report said.

"Such growth is considered doubtful, even by some of Australia's more optimistic economists."

The report suggested that the government create a "job compact" to provide jobs for six to nine months for those who had been out of work for an extended period and whose job prospects were "demonstrably poor."

Most of the jobs would be in the private sector.

The panel, comprising seven academics and government officials, also recommended an allowance for those caring for children, which would also be available for the spouses of people in low-paid jobs.

Mr. Keating, whose 1993 election promises included the creation of 500,000 jobs over three years, said such measures were at the root of Australia's egalitarian culture.

"The ethos of this country has been around the question of social participation, a 'fair go' and a fair opportunity to participate in our society," Mr. Keating said.

The government said it would respond to the proposals with an official statement early next year.

Japan plans extra budget but delays 94/95 draft

TOKYO (R) — Japan's coalition government says it is planning a third supplementary budget for this fiscal year to try to boost the stalled economy.

But it will break with tradition by leaving the draft of next year's annual budget until after the turn of the year.

"We decided to compile the 1994/95 budget in the coming year and to draw up a third supplementary budget for the current fiscal year, while deliberating political reform bills," Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa said in a weekend statement.

"The economy remains in a severe state which requires close monitoring and we need to ensure we get it on a recovery trend in 1994/95 and on a stable expansionary path in 1995/96," he said.

Mr. Hosokawa's coalition has had to fend off criticism that it is not doing enough to stimulate the economy.

The budget committee of

extended parliamentary session due to end Jan. 29.

Mr. Hosokawa has earlier pledged to enact political reforms by year-end or take responsibility, suggesting he would either resign or call snap elections.

Gaiishi Hiraiwa, chairman of the powerful business lobby Keidanren, said a delay in drafting the 1994/95 budget would run counter to policies to stimulate the economy.

By delaying the budget process, Mr. Hosokawa can also buy more time to negotiate with coalition allies and the finance ministry over tax reform plans for 1994/95, including an expected cut in income taxes of more than 6 trillion yen (\$54.5 billion).

The finance ministry has been insisting that income tax cuts must form part of a single piece of legislation that includes an offsetting rise in consumption tax, now three per cent.

The full budget is usually compiled by the end of December for parliamentary approval by the fiscal year-end on March 31. But Mr. Hosokawa appears to have put higher priority on passing political reform bills during the current

week passed a 709 billion yen (\$6.56 billion) second supplementary budget for this fiscal year.

The extra cash is needed to balance the overall budget for 1993/94 and to help finance a six trillion yen (\$55.5 billion) economic stimulus package announced in September.

The daily Asahi Shimbun Saturday quoted chief cabinet secretary Masayoshi Takemura as saying that the third extra budget would be a drastic and full-scale one.

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Shelling reported in Bosnia as Croats release more prisoners

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — Fighting with heavy arms has persisted in northern Bosnia-Herzegovina, while shelling lessened in the capital Sarajevo and the breakaway Muslim enclave of Bihać, in the northwest, a U.N. spokesman said Saturday.

U.N. military observers meanwhile were to inspect the Rajlovac and Gravica districts in northwestern Sarajevo later Saturday following reports that front lines had changed there after several days of heavy fighting, said Major Idesbald Van Biesenbeck of the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR).

Some 2,000 shells fell Friday between Gracanica and Doboj, about 100 kilometres north of here, where Bosnian Serb forces are fighting Muslim-led Bosnian government forces, the spokesman said.

He also reported artillery and tank fire near Kalesija, east of Tuzla, near the border with Serbia.

But in Sarajevo, "tension lessened" after intense shelling in the past few days, the spokesman said.

Clashes between the Bosnian army and secessionist forces in Bihać also decreased.

Croat forces meanwhile released 101 Muslim prisoners from the Rodoc Prison Camp, in the southern Mostar region.

he said.

As in the past, the release was overseen by the International Committee of the Red Cross with logistic support from UNPROFOR's Spanish contingent.

Bosnian Croat leader Mate Bohan said Saturday he expected the world to press the Muslim-led army into freeing Croat war prisoners after his forces released more than 1,000 Muslims unilaterally this week.

"It will be clear now who is who in Bosnia, in moral and every other respect," Mr. Bohan told Croatian state radio. "I am sure the Muslims will react positively to our decision."

He said he was sure the international community would now lean on the mostly Muslim Bosnian army to free detained Croats as a reciprocal gesture.

Croatian Radio reported Friday night that the Bosnian Croat Defence Council (HVO) had released all remaining Muslim prisoners of war and closed detention centres in HVO-held southwest Bosnia.

In Belgrade, political sources said Serbia's ruling Socialist Party could be denied a majority in Sunday's elections and may form a government coalition with the moderate opposition.

Opinion polls have been banned during the election campaign but newspapers said surveys showed the Socialists, led by President Slobodan Milosevic, would have the largest number of seats.

According to the forecast, the DEPOS opposition group would replace the strongly nationalist Radical Party, a former Milosevic ally, as the second largest faction in parliament.

Mr. Milosevic, casting himself in the guise of peacemaker, has worked hard to shed his international image as the architect of the territorial wars fought by Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia since their independence from former Yugoslavia.

The conflicts have brought close his ambition to unite all Serbs in a greater Serbia, a goal underwritten by all the main parties contesting the elections.

But they have been pursued at the cost of retaliatory U.N. sanctions that have destroyed Serbia's economy in a whirlwind of hyperinflation, industrial collapse and crime.

Getting the sanctions eased will be the first priority of Milosevic's next government though many fear he could be forced to resort to a state of emergency within weeks as the economy continues to deteriorate.

There is speculation in the

Japanese elections 'could be held in January'

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's 511-member lower house of parliament could be dissolved in January for general elections, an opposition leader was quoted as saying Saturday.

Yohei Kono, president of the former ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), made the prediction in a speech in Hiroshima prefecture, western Japan, Jiji Press said.

"The situation surrounding the economy and other areas is very serious. An unemployment issue is expected to emerge after the turn of the year," Kono said.

"I'm sure opinions will increase" to seek a change, the LDP leader said.

His remarks were understood by observers to indicate that the lower house might be dissolved in late January, Jiji said.

Mr. Kono bitterly criticised Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa, who decided Friday to postpone compiling the government's new year budget until early 1994.

"It's the worst of recent politi-

cal decisions. It will certainly give a minus effect on the economy and invite international criticism," the LDP president said.

Normally the Japanese government completes drafting a new year budget in December, and parliament approves bills on the budget before the new fiscal year starts in April.

Mr. Kono said emergency measures were needed now to cope with the "serious" economic slump in Japan.

He said the Hosokawa cabinet could collapse after general elections.

"He must make efforts not only for political reform but also for others. It will become difficult for Hosokawa to stay in power," Mr. Kono said.

In an apparent effort to pass political reform bills through parliament, Mr. Hosokawa extended the extraordinary parliament session, due to end Wednesday, by 45 days, to Jan. 29.

Mr. Hosokawa has indicated that he would resign as prime minister if he failed to win parliament's final approval of

the political reform bills before the end of this year.

The bills are now before the upper house after being approved by the lower chamber.

The LDP lost its 38-year grip on Japanese politics after suffering a setback in general elections held in July for the powerful lower house.

Following the LDP's election defeat, seven parties formed a coalition cabinet, led by Mr. Hosokawa, in August.

Mr. Hosokawa has dropped plans to tour Europe in mid-January, due to his tight schedule in parliament, the Japan Broadcasting Corp. reported Saturday.

Mr. Hosokawa had been considering meeting French President Francois Mitterrand, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Italian Prime Minister Carlo Azeglio Ciampi during a tour of unspecified European nations, the national network said.

While in Tokyo, Dr. Ghali is also to meet Japan's Emperor Akihito and ruling and opposition party leaders, officials said.

The U.N. secretary-general will leave Japan Wednesday for South Korea.

NEWS IN BRIEF

IRA debates peace plan, truce

BELFAST (R) — Dozens of IRA units met in secret all over Ireland Saturday divided over whether to heed an Anglo-Irish appeal to lay down their arms in return for a voice in political peace talks. But Republican sources said the IRA activists were likely to agree on their customary Christmas ceasefire while they argued about ending a 25-year war against British rule. "A Christmas truce is likely but the idea of a complete end will take much longer to debate. The Christmas ceasefire could be announced on Dec. 24," a source close to the IRA said. The sources said the meetings involved grassroots activists who would pass on their decisions to the IRA's governing army council, which could meet over the next four weeks to give its verdict on the proposals. The meetings are being held on both sides of a border the IRA wants to eliminate to unite the British-ruled and Protestant dominated province with the Catholic Irish Republic. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) activists are studying a statement by Britain and Ireland last Wednesday biling an historic opportunity to end one of the world's longest civil wars.

Kiev sticks to military demands

MOSCOW (AFP) — Ukraine kept up demands for security guarantees and compensation over its nuclear arsenal in talks with a U.S.-Russia delegation hoping to resolve a standoff over the republic's strategic missiles, news agencies reported Saturday. The Interfax News Agency said that Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Valeri Shimarov and Foreign Minister Anatoly Zlenko had insisted that the security guarantees must be met by Moscow and Washington before it would agree to dismantle the 46 long-range SS-24 missiles on Ukrainian territory. The ministers also reiterated demands for financial compensation. The three sides agreed to continue their discussions, but did not announce a new date, according to Interfax. The delegation, led by Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Georgi Mamedov, U.S. special envoy Strobe Talbott and U.S. Under-Secretary for Defense William Perry, was dispatched Thursday to Kiev as U.S. Vice President Al Gore said here that Washington and Russia shared "a strong feeling that this matter needs to be resolved."

U.S. gunman kills 2, then himself

HUGO, Oklahoma (AFP) — A gunman opened fire in the parking lot of a shopping centre, killing a married couple before turning the gun and taking his own life, police said. Three others were wounded in the shooting spree outside a Wal-Mart store near Hugo, in southeast Oklahoma. The gunman was identified as David Flinn. Using a semi-automatic rifle, he killed Luke Sheehan, 32, and his wife Mary Sheehan, then drove a short distance and committed suicide in his truck, said the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation. Authorities said a motive for the shooting had not been established, backing away from an earlier theory that the gunman knew the couple. One person was wounded by a bullet and two others were injured by flying glass. Assistant District Attorney Larry Grant said Mr. Flinn went to the local sheriff's office early Friday with a complaint about a dog and became impatient, saying, "I'll prosecute this myself." The official said Mr. Flinn purchased the rifle earlier in the day at a pawnshop, lying on the application about his criminal record. He had been convicted on assault and property crimes charges in California.

Italian mafia plotted to kill magistrate

ROME (R) — Investigators have discovered a plot to kill Sicily's chief anti-mafia magistrate, the Italian News Agency (ANSA) said. The news came as anti-Mafia authorities claimed a major victory against organised crime in eastern Sicily, rounding up some 93 people in a sweep involving 1,000 police and troops. ANSA said news of the suspected plot to kill Palermo Chief Prosecutor Giancarlo Caselli was contained in a parliamentary report on the mafia. A section of the parliamentary report said investigators had received information about plans for a "grave attack" against Mr. Caselli using an electronic system, the agency said. This was apparently a reference to a remote-control bomb. The mafia had apparently intended to kill Mr. Caselli during a visit to northern Italy. There were no further details.

Toll in Argentine unrest rises to 9

SANTIAGO DEL ESTERO, Argentina (AFP) — Army troops patrolled the streets here in the wake of riots that the hospital said left nine people dead and more than 100 injured. Meanwhile a special government envoy sent to the impoverished region arrived and promised government workers would be paid back wages. The death toll rose to nine in 36 hours of rioting by the workers in the northwestern provincial capital, said Luis Muratore Montefinos, at the Santiago Del Estero Regional Hospital. On Thursday, thousands of demonstrators, many of them government employees who have gone unpaid for three months, took over government headquarters in this northwestern provincial capital, setting fire to furniture and buildings and stoning police. Other public buildings and private homes were looted and burned during the unrest in this city of 300,000 people. Most victims died of gunshot or knife wounds or injuries due to beatings. Muratore Montefinos said, warning that the death toll could rise because many of the wounded were seriously injured.

Left rallies round Mitterrand

PARIS (R) — Socialists rallied behind President Francois Mitterrand Saturday in a row over funding of private schools, accusing France's centre-right government of trying to shatter the delicate sharing of power known as "cohabitation." The Socialist president, in his first serious clash with the conservative government, Friday attacked it for rushing a law through parliament removing limits on state aid to mainly Catholic private schools. Seizing an opportunity to rally the left, which has been in disarray since an election defeat last March, Socialist chiefs followed Mr. Mitterrand's lead Saturday in promoting secular, public education. "We can only feel wounded at the way... the government has dug up the hatchet, destroying an old consensus (on education)," Socialist former Foreign Minister Roland Dumas, a close friend of Mr. Mitterrand, told Reuters. "This decision... goes beyond the issue of private schooling and signals a return to the spirit of Vichy in our institutions," he said, referring to the collaborationist government that ruled over the unoccupied part of France in 1940-44. "All those who believe in the virtues of the republic must mobilise themselves," Mr. Dumas said. Both Mr. Dumas and Socialist Party leader Michel Rocard took part in demonstrations against the new law staged by striking teachers and schoolchildren throughout France Friday.



Members of Taiwan's opposition party Saturday struggle with riot police in Taipei in an attempt to force themselves into a meeting hall where the China — Taiwan talks are held (AFP photo)

Taiwan, China start talks amid protest

TAIPEI (R) — Taiwanese and Chinese negotiators, meeting in Taiwan for the first time ever, began a six-day round of talks Saturday as riot police scuffled with screaming protesters in the street outside.

Negotiators wrangled over provisions of a pact for the repatriation of Chinese asylum-seekers who have hijacked nine airliners to Taipei since April this year. The hijackings have become a major irritant in relations.

Taiwan's nationalist government, which lost the Chinese civil war in 1949, has said it is willing to send back the hijackers but has insisted they first be tried in Taiwan and that China promise not to try them a second time.

China has refused to accept the conditions, accusing Taiwan of indirectly encouraging the hijackings by refusing to send back suspects immediately and unconditionally.

Meanwhile, U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali arrived here Saturday for a five-day official visit to Japan on his way to South Korea.

The U.N. chief is to meet Mr. Hosokawa and Foreign Minister Tatsuo Hata Monday.

Their talks are expected to centre on a greater U.N. role, U.N. peacekeeping activities in the former Yugoslavia and North Korea's suspected nuclear development, government sources said.

While in Tokyo, Dr. Ghali is also to meet Japan's Emperor Akihito and ruling and opposition party leaders, officials said.

The U.N. secretary-general will leave Japan Wednesday for South Korea.

Previous talks were held in Singapore and China earlier this year. But the Taipei talks brought the first visit of a Chinese negotiating team to Taiwan, marking a gradual thawing in relations since the late 1980s.

More than 200 members of the main opposition democratic Progressive Party, which wants Taiwan to abandon its official goal of reunification with China, scuffled with club-wielding riot police outside the talks in a Taipei office building.

The demonstrators, carrying banners reading "don't sell out Taiwan", said they feared their government could use the talks to move towards reunification without consulting the island's 21 million people.

No firm agreements were reached on the first day of the talks, which will also discuss fishing disputes and ways to

speed up repatriation of 2,482 illegal Chinese immigrants from Taiwan.

The two sides remained far apart on issues such as whether all hijackers should be sent back without exception and the time period which could elapse between any future hijackings and the repatriation of suspects.

Hsu Hwei-Yow, the chief Taiwanese negotiator, said Taiwan wanted to reserve the right not to repatriate some hijackers if they had valid political or religious motives.

He also said Taiwan could not accept a 15-day time limit for repatriation as demanded by China.

Chinese negotiator Sun Yafu told a news conference: "Hijacking is a serious criminal offence. Hijackers should be dealt with according to their behaviour not according to their motives."

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Heavy fighting reported in Angola

LUANDA (R) — Angola's government Saturday reported heavy fighting with UNITA rebels north of the capital Luanda and in other parts of the country as peace talks remained stalled.

The sources also reported fighting in the town of Moma Quimbundo in eastern Luanda Sul Province and rebel troops movement near the besieged provincial capitals of Cuito and Mefungue, in the centre and south.

Military sources said there were intense clashes some 100 kilometres northeast of Luanda da near the strategically located town of Canacassala, which had been captured by UNITA earlier in the week.

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Diplomats in Luanda said month-long peace talks with UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) in the Zambezi capital Lusaka were stalled and were unlikely to produce any agreement before Christmas.

Pakistani court charges Bhutto's brother

KARACHI, Pakistan (R) — A special court Saturday charged Murtaza Bhutto, the jailed brother of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, with insurgency and attempting to topple the government by force.

"The prosecution has enough evidence to establish the involvement of the accused in the case," said the judge at the special court for speedy trials in the southern city of Karachi.

The court brought four charges against Murtaza Bhutto, younger brother of the prime minister, accusing him of insurgency, activities to destabilise by force the government of Pakistan, spreading hatred and rebellion against the state and provoking anti-state activities.

Murtaza and 14 co-accused pleaded not guilty to the charges, which carry a maximum penalty of death and which include involvement in the hijacking of an airliner to Kabul and Damascus in 1981 in which one man was killed.

The 39-year-old Murtaza was arrested on Nov. 3 on his return from Syria after 16 years of self-imposed exile and has been held without bail in a Karachi jail awaiting formal charges.

He had not returned to Pakistan since his father, former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was toppled in a military coup in 1977.

He has been accused of masterminding an underground group, Al-Zulfikar, set up after his father was hanged in 1979. The group has been blamed for bombings in several Pakistani cities.

The judge set the trial for Jan. 2.

Murtaza's return has provoked an embarrassing rift within the Bhutto family and residents of a New Hampshire town are turning up their noses at buffalo burgers, blocking plans to open a restaurant in their neighbourhood. The ovol burgers are the brainchild of David Langley, who runs a buffalo farm in the town and plans to open a restaurant serving buffalo meat as an alternative to beef. But the plan ran into opposition when five of Mr. Langley's neighbours filed suit against the town to block it, charging that the smell of sizzling buffalo burgers would be offensive in a residential zone.

But where do you put the presents?

LONDON (R) — A leading British gallery whose previous exhibits include a file of bricks and a roomful of rice has revived a debate about modern art by giving pride of place to an upside-down Christmas tree. The Tate Gallery in London marked the festive season by commissioning a 22-foot (6.7-metre) fir tree from Iranian artist Shirazeh Houshary. It hangs upside down from the lobby ceiling with its tip touching the floor. The roots, covered in gold leaf, crown the otherwise unadorned tree. A gallery statement Friday called it "a tree floating in air with the roots free from their earthly constraints."

"If the United States continues to resort to pressure and delaying tactics without showing concern with the progress of the dialogue, it is hard to expect that we showed the utmost leniency we could offer at the present stage."

The agency also quoted the official daily Rodong Sinmun as warning that North Korea was putting "artificial obstacles" in the way of bilateral talks, and that it would never yield to U.S. pressure over its alleged programme to produce a nuclear weapon.

"It entirely depends on the U.S. attitude whether the third round of talks are held and the nuclear problem is solved," Pyongyang's Korean Central News

Olympic skiing champion ends World Cup jinx

VAL GARDENA, Italy (R) — Austrian Olympic Champion Patrick Ortlieb ended a frustrating six-year wait when he won a downhill Saturday, his first victory on Alpine skiing's World Cup circuit.

It was sweet revenge for the burly man from the mountain resort of Lech, set for success in a downhill here Friday until the course conditions eased and allowed a series of higher starters to push him down to sixth.

"I'm not going to start celebrating until number 75 (Alphonse Gomis of Senegal) has skied," a wary Ortlieb told reporters at the finish line after clocking a time of two minutes 04.14 seconds on the Saslong Piste.

French racer Jean-Luc Cretier, with start number 37, gave the Olympic downhill champion a scare but he had to settle for third place in 2:04.66, his best ever result.

Veteran Swiss downhiller Daniel Mahrer finished second in 2:04.55.

Little-known Markus Foser of Liechtenstein, who caused a sensation when winning from start number 66 Friday, could

not repeat his heroics but skied well enough to clock 2:05.19.

"I knew it was only a matter of time before I won a world cup race and it's nice to succeed on such a prestigious course as this," Ortlieb said.

"I was pleased with how I skied on Friday and I knew that I only lost then because the weather conditions changed," added the Austrian, second here in 1988 and third last year.

"It was tough on the nerves at the finishing line but I relaxed a little after (Marc) Girardelli had raced," said the 26-year-old, in his sixth season on the circuit.

Five times World Cup winner Girardelli finished 13th, over a second slower than Ortlieb after taking third place behind unknowns Foser and Austrian Werner Franz Friday.

"The race today was much fairer and faster," added Ortlieb whose winning time was almost five seconds quicker than that of Foser.

Foser's unlikely win had been put down to a drop in the wind and the effects of the sun on the 3,446 metre piste. But the Liechten-

stein man's 12th place Saturday, from start number seven, proved it had not been a complete fluke. Franz finished down in 23rd.

Ortlieb's victory means the \$1 million booty offered to the man winning the five classic downhills — in Val D'Isere, Val Gardena, Kitzbuehel, Wengen and Garmisch — will go unclaimed this season.

Friday's race here replaced one cancelled in Val D'Isere last weekend and thus counted as one of the Grand Slam five.

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Austrian skier wins women's downhill

ST. ANTON, Austria (R) — Austria's Anja Haas delighted home crowds with the third World Cup downhill victory of her career Saturday, but it was two outsiders who stole the show.

Haas, 22, finished the two-leg race on the shortened Kan-dahar Course in an unofficial time of two minutes 19.25 seconds.

But 17-year-old team mate Renate Goetschl swept from a starting position of 62 to take fifth place in the first leg and then leaped into second overall in 2:19.35. It was Goetschl's first World Cup downhill race, though she won a slalom in Lillehammer.

Japan's Emi Kawabata, another virtual unknown, finished third in 2:19.41.

The race was run in two legs, because the course had to be shortened after heavy snowfall put the top of the piste out of action.

The downhill counts towards combined points with a slalom to be raced Sunday and organisers felt running the downhill over one leg on a truncated course would have favoured slalom specialists too much.

In the first leg the course appeared to get faster as the race went on, favouring later starters such as Goetschl and Kawabata, who started 39th. Only the top 30 went on to the second leg.

Canada's Kate Pace, winner of the World Championship downhill in Morioka, Japan, and starting 13th, finished fourth in 2:19.52, while Russia's Varvara Zelenskaya, leader after the first leg, finished a disappointing sixth.

The first leg of the race measured 2,000 metres with a vertical drop of 610 metres, the second was 1,820 metres long, with a vertical drop of 510 metres.

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"I can laugh again. I am glad about the way I withstood all the pressure," she said. "Now I have to concentrate on tomorrow."

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Turkey offers to revive pipeline idea

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Turkey is ready to revive a project to supply water to wealthy Gulf Arab states through a pipeline from two of its rivers. Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller told a newspaper here Saturday: "It is clear the Middle East is undergoing dramatic developments towards peace," she told the United Arab Emirates daily Al Ittihad. "If regional states show interest, Turkey could revive the water peace pipeline." Turkey proposed the ambitious project six years ago to supply water from its twin rivers of Ceyhan and Seyhan to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and the UAE. It paid around \$2 million for a feasibility study on the project, which it estimated to cost around \$2 billion at the time. It dubbed the project the Peace Pipeline as a symbol of what it called prosperity and cooperation among regional countries. But GCC states have turned down the proposal on the grounds its costs have increased to \$27 billion and it carries security risks.

Lebanon assures Turkey on Kurdish rebels

ANKARA (R) — Lebanon has told Turkey that Kurdish guerrilla leader Abdullah Ocalan is persona non grata in Lebanon and that it does not want guerrillas to use Lebanese territory to prepare for attacks in Turkey. Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri gave the assurances on Friday during his visit to Turkey, which has been pressing Syria, Lebanon, Iran and the Kurds in northern Iraq to crack down on the separatist Kurdish Labour Party (PKK). Lebanon has closed down PKK training camps in Syrian-controlled eastern Lebanon but the Ocalan, the PKK leader, does visit Lebanon occasionally and some Kurdish guerrillas remain in Beirut and in the Bekaa Valley. Mr. Hariri, asked whether the Lebanese government would detain Mr. Ocalan if it caught him in Lebanon, told the Turkish newspaper hurriyet: "We will throw him out of Lebanon."

EC gives Syria development aid

DAMASCUS (R) — The European Community (EC) is looking for stronger economic and social links with Syria after it approved a financial protocol for the country totalling more than \$178 million, a statement released here Saturday said. The statement issued by the European Commission in Damascus said the financial protocol approved by the European Parliament on Wednesday to Syria amounting to 158 million European currency units (\$178 million) would finance development projects. The European Parliament unblocked the aid to Syria which had been held up because of concerns over human rights.

Militants kill police colonel in Cairo

CAIRO (AFP) — Suspected Muslim militants on Saturday shot and killed a police colonel as he was leaving his house in northern Cairo, police said. Colonel Ahmad Shauan, of the state security services, was attacked in the working-class Mataria neighbourhood as he climbed into his car heading for work, they said. He was wearing civilian clothes. The assailants, whose number was not specified, fled the scene and security officers launched a manhunt, they added. The shooting comes 48 hours after the hanging of three militants convicted of seeking to overthrow the secular government of President Hosni Mubarak. Fundamentalist organisations have repeatedly threatened to avenge the executions. Col. Shauan's death brings to 81 the number of policemen killed since March 1992 when extremists stepped up their anti-government campaign. More than two-thirds of them were posted in southern Egypt.

Israeli undercover units strengthened

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Israeli army has stepped up the activities of its undercover units responsible for tracking down wanted Palestinians, due to a rise in anti-Israeli attacks, a commander of one of the units said Saturday. "We have a bigger presence on the ground and our activities have been bolstered due to the growth in the activities of (extremists) who claim success in killing settlers," the commander told Israeli Radio. "They are using increasingly sophisticated methods, and we are adapting to them, because our work against wanted armed Palestinians continues." The colonel, whose name was not given, was from a unit deployed in the occupied West Bank. He said there was no question of dismantling the special units, whose members are usually disguised as Palestinians, despite the autonomy accord signed Sept. 13 in Washington.

Christian, Jewish leaders to meet

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Christian and Jewish leaders from 96 countries will meet at an inter-faith conference in Jerusalem next February 1, an organiser said on Saturday. "It is the first international meeting between the different Christian churches and the Jewish religion," Avraham Fried, the director of the Centre for Cultural and Social Studies in Jerusalem, told Reuters. Among those due to attend are Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger from the Vatican, Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini of Milan, Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem Michel Suhail and Israel's chief rabbis.

Libya, Iran urge anti-West unity

CAIRO (AP) — Libya and Iran urged fellow Muslims to work together, strengthening their religion to meet the challenge of all Islam's common foe, the West. "The enemy wants to sow discord" among Muslims, Libyan Prime Minister Abu Zeid Omar Durdah said. "The Islamic countries should muster all their resources and show solidarity... to eliminate these problems." Libya Radio reported his comments Saturday in a broadcast monitored in London. It said visiting Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati of Iran, joining Mr. Durdah in the appeal after a meeting in Tripoli on Friday, offered greater Iranian cooperation with Islamic countries.

Iran says dozens of dissidents return

NICOSIA (AP) — Iran said Saturday that two dozen dissidents linked to a leading opposition group based in Iraq have given up the fight and returned to their homeland. The Islamic Republic News Agency, said the dissident, "member" and supporters of the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq, had turned themselves in at Iranian embassies abroad, "expressing regret for their past wrongdoings." The state-run agency said they were flown Saturday to Tehran from the United Arab Emirates and apparently tried to create the impression that the returnees would not be severely punished. There was no way of establishing the veracity of the report, monitored by the Associated Press in Nicosia. A Mujahedeen spokesman, Ali Safavi, called it a "sheer lie," had "a desperate reaction by the mullahs" to the organisation's challenge.

American aid worker maimed in Somalia

NAIROBI (AFP) — An American aid worker and several Somalis were seriously wounded when their vehicle hit a landmine near the southwestern Somali town of Lec, a relief official said Saturday. Ken Rutherford of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) has had a leg amputated and doctors fear that he may lose the other one, an IRC official said. Mr. Rutherford, 28, was evacuated to the Kenyan capital Nairobi for the operation, and was to be flown to the United States for further treatment. The details of the incident, which occurred on Thursday, were still unclear. IRC officials said. The condition of the Somalis was unknown. Several foreign aid workers have been shot dead and several others wounded since foreign troops landed in Mogadishu last December. Four U.S. soldiers were killed by a landmine blast in August.

Israel may accept peacekeepers in Gaza

The Jerusalem Post

ISRAEL has for the first time agreed to an international peace-keeping presence in the Gaza Strip, according to the draft proposal it submitted to the PLO last week in Cairo.

The Jerusalem Post has reviewed the 90-page document and found the following points:

The proposal allows for up to 100 civilians who may not possess weapons to comprise what the document terms a temporary, international presence. "The civilians can help

in such duties as assisting the Palestinian police.

The document lists what Palestinian organizations are acceptable and whose imprisoned members would be eligible for release.

The proposal makes it clear that when trouble erupts anywhere in the areas of Palestinian self-rule, the IDF (Israeli military) would be responsible. This includes the possibility of war or infiltration of hostile forces in Gaza or Jericho.

According to the document,

"If there is a conflict between Israeli security authorities and any other authority, power or responsibility... Israeli security authorities and responsibility shall prevail pending the resolution of this dispute and Israel may act to restore the situation of that prior to the conflict."

Officials regard the most sensitive portion of the document as that dealing with extradition, something not dealt with in the declaration of principles.

Regarding what Israel can

do when its forces are in pursuit of suspected terrorists, and have information that a wanted criminal has sought refuge in Gaza or Jericho, the document says when a Palestinian commits a "serious crime" against an Israeli, the army can demand the transfer or arrest of the Palestinian suspect. If the Palestinian police force fails to do that, Israeli authorities are to do the job themselves.

The Israeli proposal outlines the Palestinian police force. It will consist of five branches: a civil police; a para-

military gendarmerie; internal security intelligence similar to the General Security Service; emergency services, and coastal patrols.

Palestinian and Israeli security forces will organise joint patrols in several areas of the Gaza Strip, according to the Israeli proposal. The document rules out any transfer of police authority.

A senior PLO source dismissed the Israeli document, saying "it's not worth the garbage can it should be thrown into."

Aided lieutenants said to fast in jail

MOGADISHU (Agencies) — Three officials of Somali warlord Mubarak Farah Aided's faction have launched a hunger-strike to protest the "very harsh conditions" of their imprisonment by U.N. forces in Somalia.

In a letter released late Saturday, the three officials of the Somali National Alliance (SNA) said they had been "fasting from food or drink" because of the conditions in which they have been held, since their arrests in September.

"We are held in very harsh conditions of solitary confinement in strict incommunicado and blindfolded, with bad food and a lack of body washing and laundering water, under extremely scorching sun on an island off the southern coast of Somalia," the three men said in the letter, released by the SNA.

The organisation failed to explain how the men had managed to get the letter out of their place of detention.

The three being held are Osman Otto, a wealthy businessman considered to be the financier of the SNA, Omer Salad Elmi and Mubarak Hassan Awale.

"Our conditions of health were already bad and we don't know how our health and even lives will be after fasting," the letter said. The date of when they began the hunger-strike was crossed out and illegible.

"We appeal to the Somali people, world leaders and peoples, and human rights groups to look into our case and secure our release and those of other Somali captives as well."

"We were arrested and detained unlawfully and unfairly by sheer force," they said.

Last month the U.N. released around 30 supporters of General Aided and suspended a manhunt for the warlord, wanted in connection with an attack that killed 24 Pakistani soldiers.

SNA officials said the hunger strike began on Thursday and would continue until U.S. forces set them free.

American troops serving as U.N. peacekeepers detained the three men during an unsuccessful campaign to capture and try Gen. Aided for planning a massacre of Pakistani troops in June.

The hunt was called off a battle in which Gen. Aided's militia killed 18 U.S. servicemen.

It was not possible to authenticate the letter and the SNA did not explain how they wrote it and signed it under the conditions it described.

The men are believed to be held near the southern port city of Kismayu.

Kuwait sad to hear talk of ending Iraq curbs

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait's prime minister said it was sad to hear speculation about a possible lifting of economic sanctions against Iraq.

Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sahar was quoted as saying,

"One should not forget that the current Iraqi regime is the real reason for this economic blockade which has brought catastrophes to the Iraqi people," he was quoted as saying.

Sheikh Saad, who did not identify who was talking about lifting sanctions, was speaking in an interview with the Saudi newspaper said.

Sheikh Saad reiterated a demand that Iraq recognise the newly-demarcated border and the sovereignty of Kuwait. He also repeated a long-standing accusation that Iraq is detaining more than 600 Kuwaitis and people of other nationalities captured during its 1990-91 occupation.

Iraq, which occupied Kuwait for seven months in 1990-91, still claims Kuwait as its 19th province. Baghdad denies it still holds anyone detained during the Gulf crisis.

The combined strength of the 10 groups, which espouse ideologies ranging from Marxism to Islamic fundamentalism, could hamper Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat's quest to take control of territories that will soon gain autonomy from Israel.

Iraq has said oil sales under these conditions would be humiliating and a violation of its sovereignty.

Kuwait says it does not formally demand the removal of the Saddam government but would like all major disputes between the two countries removed before sanctions are lifted.

The Al Jazeera report made no mention of the start last week of Baghdad's repatriation of Iraqis from a border strip the United Nations has defined as Kuwaiti territory.

The Iraqi move, easing one of many points of tension between Iraq and Kuwait, was the latest in a string of positive Iraqi gestures to the international community in the past month.

Other gestures have included Baghdad's acceptance of long-term monitoring of its future weapons potential and releases of Western jail inmates.

Western diplomats say Iraq would have to formally recognise Kuwait and the demarcated border before Washington would even consider agreeing to lift the embargo.

Prospects for another Arafat-Rabin meeting remained unclear, and Palestinian opponents and Jewish settlers, who also oppose the accord, have stepped up violence in the occupied lands.

The 10 Palestinian hardline groups variously advocate an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza, seized from Jordan and Egypt in 1967, and the total destruction of Israel.

The hardliners formed an opposition front in September 1992 to challenge the PLO's moderate strategy. But it has



Palestinian hardliners consolidate alliance

By Jamal Halaby
The Associated Press

AMMAN — After months of deliberations, hardline Palestinian factions have formed an alliance dedicated to wrecking the Israel-PLO autonomy deal, faction leaders said Saturday.

They said the "Alliance of Palestinian Forces" will soon set up a joint command to direct the six-year-old Palestinian uprising in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Iraq, which occupied Kuwait for seven months in 1990-91, still claims Kuwait as its 19th province. Baghdad denies it still holds anyone detained during the Gulf crisis.

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The hardliners formed an opposition front in September 1992 to challenge the PLO's moderate strategy.

The sources said the Americans' meetings were arranged by the Syrians.

Earlier this month, Mr. Assad promised U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher when he visited Damascus that the Syrians would help determine the fate of the missing Israelis.

Syria played a key role in the release of Western hostages held by Hizbullah between 1986 and 1991.

Mr. Assad's pledge apparently was part of a deal negotiated by Mr. Christopher for the Syrians to resume stalled peace talks with Israel.

Mr. Assad is scheduled to meet President Bill Clinton in Geneva Jan. 16 and has been meeting with his Iranian and Lebanese allies in recent days in advance of that crucial summit. Iran opposes the peace process.

PLO staff demand pay

AMMAN (AP) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) employees staged a sit-in Saturday at the PLO mission to demand payment of their salaries for the past six months.

Protesters said they represented some members of the Palestine Liberation Army stationed in Iraq and activists of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction in Jordan.

Several dozen Palestinians sat in front of the mission for about 30 minutes before dispersing peacefully. Some said they planned to stage a demonstration with slogans and banners on Sunday.

Zakaria Al Habashneh, who is demanding backpay from October 1991 after working for Fatah in Lebanon, said: "We have not received our salaries for many months: some of us for two years."

"The only think we get is promises, which are not enough to feed our families," said outside the PLO mission.

"If we are not paid, then we will use every means to secure our rights," said Mr. Habashneh. He did not elaborate.

A senior PLO official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Amman mission did not have enough funds to meet the demands of the protesters.

"The only thing we could do is to send their demands to the PLO," said the official.

PLO finances are controlled directly by Mr. Arafat, who is based in Tunis.

Many Gulf countries stopped their financial aid to the PLO when Arafat supported Iraq following its invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. They also froze several hundred million dollars in "liberation" tax collected from Palestinian expatriates.

The dried up donations have forced the PLO in 1991 to slash its \$500 million annual budget by 70 per cent.

U.S. senators discuss with Syria fate of missing Israelis

Hizbullah insists that the Israelis must first free thousands of Arabs they hold before it will discuss the fate of the missing Israelis.

The sources said the Americans' meetings were arranged by the Syrians.

The sources did not say if, anything, the closed door talks achieved.

But if the reports were correct, they could mark a significant step forward in removing the emotive issue of the missing Israelis from the Syrian-Israeli negotiations.

It would also be the first meeting between the anti-Western Hizbullah and U.S. officials.

The U.S. delegation left Damascus Friday and flew to Israel.

Israel Radio Saturday quoted Mr. Deconinck and Mr. Specter as saying that Mr. Assad had assured the U.S. delegation full Syrian cooperation in determining the fate of the missing Israelis and was ready to press forward with the peace talks.